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SELECT  
PRACTICAL WRITINGS  
OF  
JOHN KNOX.

ISSUED BY THE COMMITTEE OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,  
FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THE WORKS OF  
SCOTTISH REFORMERS AND DIVINES.

EDINBURGH:  
PRINTED FOR THE ASSEMBLY'S COMMITTEE.  
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## GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND.

### COMMITTEE FOR PUBLISHING THE WORKS OF SCOTTISH REFORMERS AND DIVINES.

**I**N issuing their first volume, the Committee think it right to place on record, by way of general preface, the deliverance of the General Assembly appointing them, together with a portion of their first circular, to explain the nature of the plan which they were appointed to carry out.

“Edinburgh, 18th May, 1844.—Sess. 4.

“The General Assembly having called for the Overture by certain members of the house for the appointment of a Committee, or board of Religious Publication, and for the Overture from the Synod of Aberdeen relative to a Catechism on Presbyterianism, said Overtures were read. The General Assembly cordially approve of the objects contemplated in these Overtures, and resolve to appoint a Committee, for the purpose of carrying these objects into effect; with power to the Committee to superintend the issue of such of the practical and other writings of the Scottish Reformers, and the Divines of former times, as may seem suitable in these days, at a rate which may bring them within the reach of the people; and also, with authority to prepare suitable Tracts and Catechisms in Gaelic, as well as in English, on the different topics referred to in these Overtures, for circulation among the families of our land.”

EXTRACT CIRCULAR ISSUED BY THE COMMITTEE IN JUNE, 1844.

The object in view is, to secure the republication of the good old theological literature of Scotland, in such a form, and under such arrangements, as will bring it within the reach of every family. This object the Committee seek to accomplish, by an extensive subscription throughout the country, on the principle of the Parker, Wodrow, and other societies, but at a greatly reduced rate. *Four shillings a year, or one shilling a quarter,*

is the sum to be subscribed; and for this sum every subscriber is to receive *at least three volumes* every year, of a good size, and large type, each volume containing about 350 pages. This is on the supposition of the subscribers amounting to about 20,000,—the number of subscribers being unlimited.

The Committee think it right to state, that it is not their intention to issue, on this plan, any new or copy-right works, but rather to bring out those valuable treatises of practical theology and personal religion, which have to a large extent fallen aside, and do not form part of the ordinary stock of booksellers.

It is plain, indeed, that this proposal has a new and independent field of its own to occupy. The mass of the people never think of going to the booksellers' shops, especially to buy such books as this Committee propose to issue. Nay, even when such books are offered from door to door, whether in whole volumes, or in parts and numbers, but few, comparatively, become purchasers. But there is a charm in the feeling, that by subscribing his *four shillings a year*, or *one shilling a quarter*, a man becomes a member of an association, and acquires a title to have his three or perhaps four volumes, every year, delivered at his own house; and if, in this way, the Committee succeed in introducing among the people the practical writings of the old Scottish worthies, and secure that they shall be read, (as they are more likely to be, when thus presented, in single volumes, at stated intervals, than if they were bought all at once, entire), the result will be, by God's blessing, an increased appetite for religious literature of the best sort, which religious authors and booksellers will have to exert themselves, with increased diligence, to satisfy.

But the chief recommendation of the plan, is the direct good it is fitted to accomplish.

The divines of the two Scottish Reformations, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and their not unworthy successors in the beginning and middle of the eighteenth, may have been less erudite and accomplished scholars than the giants of the Anglican Church, and less elegant rhetoricians than the school of Tillotson; but in Scriptural and practical divinity, they attained to such richness, copiousness, and variety, as none but

the Puritans have ever rivalled; while, in addition, their national shrewdness, and stern force of intellect, combining with the sound creed which Knox learned from Calvin, preserved them from that oscillation or vibration between Pelagianism and Antinomianism, which has too often, especially in times of excitement or awakening, characterised the Evangelism of other lands. At all events, the writings of the men who compiled our earlier standards, and who had the chief hand in the composition of the Shorter Catechism,—the writings which formed the Scottish character in Scotland's best days, and whose dingy and well-thumbed volumes, preserved on cottage shelves, from generation to generation, and read, on winter evenings, by the dim fire-light, kept alive true religion in many a district where, in the pulpit, the trumpet gave forth an uncertain sound, or a sound all too certain on the side of error,—the writings which, beginning with Knox's startling appeals, take in the many weighty words of wisdom with which a suffering and often sinning Church was edified, till they come down to Boston's faithful searchings of heart, and the pointed sermons of the Erskines,—these writings must be worthy of a revival, especially in an age which has been summoned once more to take up its hereditary testimony for the crown-rights of the Redeemer, and the spiritual freedom of his Church.

It is good that such a man as Rutherford should be known to the modern religious world by his Letters as well as by his *Lex Rex*; and there are many others among the Scottish Martyrs and confessors, of whom men think as merely hard and dry controversialists in a strife of ecclesiastical politics, to whom justice may be done, by rescuing from oblivion their devout exercises before God, and their deep, experimental dealings with the souls and consciences of their fellow-men. If Scotland owns these Fathers as handing down to her the principles of her church polity, she may do well to consult them, as having also moulded the form, and breathed into that form the spirit of her homely and heart-felt piety; and if, in his great kindness and forbearance, God is now pouring out upon any portion of his Church a measure of the blessing which was often experienced of old, and reviving his work in the midst of the years, nothing

can be more suitable for giving a healthy tone to such a movement, and preventing the risk of its being marred by shallow and upstart fancies, than the attempt to leaven the minds of men now, with the same style and kind of Christianity, high-toned, manly, and practical, as well as deeply meditative and spiritual, which was formed, under God, by those masters in ancient learning, moral science, and Holy Writ, whose works it is intended to bring again into notice and into use.

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The Committee have only further to state, that already the number of Subscribers amounts to nearly 40,000, chiefly in Scotland alone: and that the scheme is gradually extending, both here and in other countries. The publications being stereotyped, new subscribers may be supplied, from time to time, with the earlier volumes.

The Rev. THOMAS THOMSON, Editor of Calderwood for the Wodrow Society, having been appointed by the Committee to edit their publications, with the assistance of members of the Committee, has prepared the following volume with extreme care, collating the different editions and MSS. to which he had access, and writing out an accurate copy for the press. The Committee are also deeply indebted to the Rev. Thomas M'Crie for most valuable aid in the preparation of this volume, and in the general management of the scheme.

With these explanations, the Committee earnestly commend this undertaking to the prayers of the people of God, that his blessing may render these treatises as useful, to the saving of souls and the advancement of his cause, now, as they were of old, when they issued fresh from the pen of their living author.

(Signed)

In name of the Committee,

ROBT. S. CANDLISH, *Convener.*

EDINBURGH, December, 1844.



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## KNOX AND HIS WRITINGS.

BY THE EDITOR.

**J**OHN KNOX was born in the year 1505, but it is uncertain whether his birth-place was Gifford, in East Lothian, or the town of Haddington. After receiving the elements of a learned education at the Grammar School of Haddington, he entered the University of Glasgow in his sixteenth year. Here, such was his proficiency as a scholar, and subsequently, his reputation as a lecturer and teacher, that he was admitted to priest's orders before he had attained the canonical age of twenty-five. But the fervent spirit of enquiry which had been kindled within him at college, made him narrowly examine the doctrines of that church in which he had become an office-bearer. He read and prayed, he doubted and was dissatisfied; and the principles of the Reformation, already preached in Scotland, arrested his attention and secured his assent. But it was by no sudden burst of conviction that the change in his belief was accomplished. He who was to become the Reformer of his country, behoved, like Luther, to undergo a long and painful process, before he was fitted for his mission; and it was not until he had reached the mature age of thirty-eight, that his doubts were fully resolved, and he became a Protestant.


The change thus wrought upon the mind of Knox, was soon apparent to the world. His zeal in the pursuit of truth, and boldness in proclaiming it, which ever after were his great characteristics, induced him, as a lecturer in the College of St. Andrews, to decry

the old methods of investigation, and direct his pupils to sounder principles of enquiry. This excited the attention of his superiors, and their suspicions were quickly confirmed. He was denounced as a heretic, and degraded from the priesthood; and on betaking himself to flight, emissaries were sent by Cardinal Beaton, to way-lay and murder him. Two years after we find him attending Wishart in his missionary labours, and carrying a two-handed sword before him, to guard him from assassins. The martyr himself appears to have foreseen the usefulness of this devoted follower: for just before his own apprehension, he took from Knox the two-handed sword; and on the latter entreating to be allowed to remain with him, and share in his danger, Wishart affectionately replied, "Nay, return to your bairns, and God bless you; one is enough for a sacrifice."

After this event, Knox returned to the house of Hugh Douglas of Long Niddrie, to whose children he was tutor; and there he was accustomed to assemble, in a neighbouring chapel, not only the family, but the inhabitants of that district, whom he instructed in the reformed doctrines. The assassination of Cardinal Beaton, and the persecution that followed, made this residence unsafe; and at the urgent entreaty of his employers, he retired with his pupils into the castle of St. Andrews, now the chief refuge of the persecuted. The small garrison was attacked by the forces of Scotland and France, but made a gallant resistance. It was during this siege, that Knox was summoned to the public work of the ministry, by the unanimous voice of the people. He trembled, wept, and shut himself up in his chamber, overwhelmed with thoughts of the responsibility of the office—but he did not dare

to disobey. The commencement of his ministrations amongst a handful of people, in a beleaguered tower, was the beginning of a mighty æra in the history of Scotland—it founded and established that important characteristic by which the history of the Scottish Reformation was ever afterwards distinguished. In England, where the change had been little more than a mere court revolution, guided by the most sordid impulses, the church had been rather plundered than reformed, so that most of the ancient ceremonies, and much of the error, were left undisturbed; and hitherto, even in Scotland, the first reformers had contented themselves with assailing only the more gross corruptions of the Romish establishment. But instead of timidly pruning the branches, Knox boldly laid the axe to the root. It was not a few excesses that were to be removed: the whole trunk was corrupt, and must be hewn down. Such was the first onset of that uncompromising warfare which he waged with antichrist to the end of his career, and the principle of which, he recommended and bequeathed to his country through all succeeding generations.

At last, the garrison of St. Andrews capitulated to overwhelming numbers, after a brave resistance. And yet, overborne as they were, they only yielded upon honourable conditions. These were, that they should be safely conveyed to France, and afterwards be allowed to retire to any country they pleased, except Scotland. But their treacherous captors violated the terms; for on the arrival of the prisoners in France, some were thrown into dungeons, and the rest were sent chained to the galleys. Of the latter number was Knox, who for nineteen months was compelled to labour at the oar, under sorrow, privation, and sick-



ness, during which his life was at one time despaired of. But even in this state, and with the towers of St. Andrews looming in sight, as his galley sailed along the coast of Scotland, he declared, that God would yet again open his mouth in that place, where he had first been called to preach. His prayers to the Most High for deliverance were heard and answered, for he was set at liberty in February, 1549, in consequence of the urgent application of Edward VI of England, to the King of France. At the period of his liberation, the state of affairs in Scotland was so unsettled, and the violence of persecution so high, that had Knox repaired thither, he would probably have been apprehended and put to death, even if he had been permitted to land: he therefore passed over to England, where his labours in the meantime were likely to be most effective, and where he could best observe the progress of events in his own country.

The spiritual condition of England at this time was well fitted to excite the sympathy of our Reformer. The public mind had been so unsettled by the imperious changes of Henry VIII, veering between Popery and Protestantism according to the mood of the moment, and had been so often compelled to adapt its faith to the last royal statute, that the majority of the nation had become indifferent to all belief; the clergy, and especially the bishops, who had conformed to the royal pleasure, only waited the opportunity of returning to their secretly-cherished ancient faith: while the nobles and courtiers, whose avarice had been sharpened by church plunder, were ready to welcome any change that promised a fresh bribe. And to withstand this ignorance, this indifference, this selfishness, there was

the boy-king Edward VI, and the gentle timid Cranmer! To the few devoted friends of the Reformation in England, the arrival of Knox was a welcome event, for the history of his toils and sufferings in the cause of truth was not unknown to them. As the faithful labourers at this time were few indeed, so that the most eminent of the clergy had to itinerate as missionaries over extensive districts, Knox, on his arrival in London, was sent by Cranmer and the Council, to Berwick. Here, he itinerated and preached for two years with distinguished success, notwithstanding the opposition of Tonsal, Bishop of Durham; after which he was removed to Newcastle, where his sphere of usefulness was more extensive; and in 1551, the Council expressed their sense of the value of his services, by appointing him one of the chaplains in ordinary to the young king. But in every change, the persecution that followed him kept pace with the success of his ministrations. While he laboured in Berwick, he was arraigned before the Council of the North, for teaching that the mass was idolatrous; and now, in his capacity of royal chaplain, he was summoned before the Privy Council, to answer for his bold denunciations of the selfish and profligate courtiers. But unsparing though he had been, and sharp as were his enemies, there was nothing in the form of calumny or falsehood that could be substantiated against his sermons, and he was honourably acquitted.

Hitherto Knox had laboured as a missionary and upon the borders; but so greatly was his value appreciated, that higher offices in the church were offered, to tempt him to settle in England. The first of these was the living of All-Hallows in London, tendered by Cranmer, in February, 1553. With the

scanty revenue of forty pounds a-year as a royal chaplain, and with a constitution still suffering from the effects of his confinement in the French galleys, it would have been thought nothing blameable, if Knox had embraced such a prospect of ease and comfort in the metropolis. But to the surprise, and somewhat to the displeasure of his friends, he refused the presentation—and on the cause of his refusal being demanded, he frankly stated before the Privy Council, that he was not free in his conscience to accept a permanent charge in the English church, believing as he did, that it was not yet sufficiently reformed in sacraments and discipline. The more tempting offer of the bishopric of Rochester succeeded, at the special desire of the king himself; but this he also refused upon the same principle. To this refusal he alludes in the course of his writings; and by stating the fact, he also refuted the slander of his enemies, who insinuated, near the close of his life, that his dislike to the appointment of a bishop to St. Andrews, arose from chagrin at not being himself appointed. “I have refused,” he said, “a greater bishopric than ever this was, which I might have had, with the favour of greater men than he hath his.”

And now the time was at hand, when neither church preferment, nor yet even personal safety, was to be within the reach of this conscientious recusant. Edward sickened; and courtiers and prelates anticipating a Popish successor, scowled upon Knox and his fellow-labourers, and were already putting their recantation into rehearsal, as if that had been to form a part of the coronation pageant. The gentle and pious king expired, Mary was proclaimed; and such a spirit of drunken loyalty blinded all classes, as



nothing but the fires of Smithfield sufficed to dissipate. This ungrateful forgetfulness of the past, and deadness to the future, so grieved the heart of Knox, that although it was a perilous duty, he rebuked the levity of the people, and predicted in no equivocal terms the calamities that were at hand. He also resumed with fresh diligence his missionary duties, for he knew that the opportunity would be brief. What he had sadly foreseen and announced, soon followed. The Romish creed was restored to its former authority, and all who dissented, were exposed to the pains of heresy. Some of the most eminent of the English reformers were thrown into prison, while others became wanderers in distant lands. Although the danger deepened around him, Knox still lingered at his post, until he was compelled by the affectionate violence of his friends to provide for his own safety. He therefore repaired to the coast, and having found a vessel, he embarked for France, and arrived at Dieppe in Normandy, on the 28th of February, 1554.

The foregoing brief account of Knox's labours in England, will in some degree illustrate those portions of his writings which he addressed to his personal friends, or to the people at large in that kingdom. The first in order of these, is his Treatise on Prayer, (see p. 31 of this vol.) which was first published in July, 1554, under the following copious title, "A Confession, and Declaration of Prayers added thereunto, by John Knox, minister of Christ's most sacred Evangel, upon the death of that most famous king, Edward VI, King of England, France, and Ireland; in which Confession, the said John doth accuse no less his own offences, than the offences of others, to be the cause of the away-taking of that most godly prince now

reigning with Christ, while we abide plagues for our unthankfulness." In the Treatise itself, which is rich in Christian consolation and counsel, we have an affecting account of his own supplications while a prisoner in the French galleys, and the comfort he received from communion with God even in his lowest estate, combined with animating encouragements towards faith and hope, from the example of his own deliverance. The confession and prayer was that which he commonly used in the pulpit, after the king's decease; and there it will be seen, that he expressly prayed for Queen Mary, and for the suppression of those who rebelled against her lawful authority. This is a sufficient proof, among others which occur in this volume, that he was the friend of peace and order, instead of tumult and revolution; and that whatever might be his own personal sentiments, he was ready to submit to every constitutional authority, even though it might be impersonated in a "female regimen."

When Knox arrived in Dieppe, he found himself a solitary stranger, not knowing what might next await him, or whence he should derive a bare subsistence. But this was not the chief subject of his anxiety. He thought of the flock he had left, and who were now as sheep without a shepherd. Trial and persecution had fallen upon them, under which the timid fainted, and the unconfirmed were guilty of tergiversation. As is usual in such cases, many thought it lawful to purchase safety, by an external compliance with error, if they only held the truth in secret within their own hearts. Reports of such instances of apostacy reached the exile in his retirement, and immediately his pen addressed them with the same earnestness, that had

formerly animated his living voice in warning and instructing them. A short time therefore after his arrival, he wrote and transmitted his Letter to the Faithful in London, Newcastle, and Berwick, (p. 60,) in which he announced the deadly consequences of apostacy, and exhorted them by every tender and animating appeal, to hold fast their profession during these days of general defection. And amidst these his public anxieties, his generous heart had large room for the individual sorrows of his own kindred. His mother-in-law, Mrs. Bowes, as may be gathered from the Letters at the end of this volume, was a lady of deep piety, but labouring under severe spiritual depression, in which she often doubted the sincerity of her faith, and despaired of salvation. It was to remove these agonising misgivings, and speak peace to her troubled heart, that Knox commenced in England the Exposition of the Sixth Psalm, (p. 106). The First part of this most experimental treatise was finished on the 6th of January, 1554, and was sent without signature or intimation of place; for already, his enemies had been on the alert, and a packet of letters which he had previously sent to his wife and mother-in-law, had been intercepted and examined. The Second part was finished at the end of the following month, and transmitted from Dieppe. A few months afterwards, Knox having travelled into Switzerland, where his depression was alleviated by the kindly intercourse of Christian brethren, was enabled to address his friends in England in the language of encouragement and hope. He therefore wrote to them the letter, entitled a Comfortable Epistle (p. 149.) In this short address, after exhorting the faithful to patience, from the consideration that their

state, thus depressed and persecuted, was that into which the church of God had often been brought in former ages, he animated them with the hope, that a deliverance similar to that of the church of old, would also be theirs. But although their persecutors were to be humbled and destroyed, the faithful were in no case to be the avengers of their own wrongs, nor yet, were they even to hate the persons of those who had unjustly afflicted them. On the contrary, they were to pray for them, and leave them in the hands of God. This letter is dated the last of May, 1554. It was at the close of the same year, that he penned the most copious and elaborate of his addresses to the English, entitled a Faithful Admonition, in which he consoled them with the promise, that although their boat was tossed in the midnight storm, yet in the first watch, they should see Christ coming to them, walking upon the waters. This year indeed in the history of the Reformer, was rich in Treatises, Addresses, and Letters, which compose a large portion of his printed works. And when we consider his aversion to authorship while employed in the duty of preaching—a circumstance to which he alludes in his preface to the sermon on Isaiah, chap. xxvi—the Christian reader will adore the wisdom of that providence, by which Knox was led to a strange land, that there, he might not only find safety, but also give utterance to those rich and nervous instructions which have descended to posterity, and which, we trust, the world will never willingly let die.

Hitherto, the public labours of Knox had been chiefly confined to England, and when persecution arrived with the accession of Mary, the condition of Scotland, at that time less troubled, occupied a smaller

portion of his anxiety and regret. But his native land was henceforth to be the beloved object of his cares. In 1555 he returned to England, to visit his friends; and finding the opportunity favourable, he repaired secretly to Edinburgh. There, he preached in private houses with such success, that multitudes thronged to hear him; after which, he visited different parts of the country, where he not only preached, but dispensed the sacrament of the Supper to large congregations. The report of these daring proceedings astounded the Romish priests, who could not imagine who the new comer might be. Some said, he was an Englishman: "No," replied the Archbishop of Glasgow, "it is no Englishman, but Knox, that knave!" A Convention was summoned to be held at Edinburgh on the fifteenth of May, before which, the preacher was to be tried as a heretic; but his friends, who dreaded the summary proceedings of these tribunals, accompanied him in such force, that the priests in dismay deserted the diet. He now continued to preach unmolested, and with such success, that in writing to his mother-in-law, he uses these affecting words, "Oh! sweet were the death that should follow such forty days in Edinburgh, as here I have had three!"

Mary of Guise, queen regent of Scotland, instead of suppressing, had hitherto tolerated the Reformers but from no partiality either to them or their cause. As her tenure of power was insecure, she merely regarded them as a party, with which she could alarm or counterpoise the faction of her enemies, the Hamiltons, while she fondly thought, that she could crush the Reformation at pleasure, when it had reached a certain height, or was no longer subservient to her

purposes. But this Italian policy was too refined for the Scots to comprehend, and the Earls Marischal and Glencairn believed in the honesty of their hearts, that the same arguments might move the regent, which had proved so influential with themselves. They therefore entreated Knox, to solicit her favourable attention towards the reformed doctrines and preachers: and in consequence of their wish, he wrote the Letter to the Lady Mary, dowager, Regent of Scotland (p. 161). This epistle, which is evidently composed with great care, and with an earnest desire to avoid offence, exhibits all the deep regard to royalty which was the characteristic of the age, without that fulsome servility by which it was so often degraded; and in cautious, well-measured terms, the writer sets before her the duties of rulers as the guardians of religion, and the danger of neglecting them. But the queen was not to be so moved. She read the letter coldly, and within a day or two after, she handed it to the Archbishop of Glasgow, saying with a scornful smile, "Please you, my lord, to read a pasquil!" Two years after, when Knox was abroad, he published the letter with copious additions; and in allusion to her taunt, he said, "If you do no more esteem the admonition of God's servants, than cardinals do the scoffing of pasquils, then he shall shortly send you messengers, with whom you shall not be able to jest in that manner."

Although the preaching of the Reformer had been so successful, he was again obliged to become an exile. The personal hatred of the Romish party was so keen against him, that his further stay in Scotland would only have perilled the safety of his friends, and therefore he judged it advisable in 1556 to repair to Geneva.

Before his departure, he was most anxious to impress upon the minds of his friends, the necessity of maintaining the practice of social worship, in the absence of a regular ministry: and on his arrival at Dieppe, he sent to them his advice on the subject, in his *Most Wholesome Counsel* (p. 173). In this letter, he unfolds the plan, and recommends the practice of those meetings among Christians for prayer, reading of the word, and mutual instruction, which were common in every country, at the first introduction of the truth, or during seasons of persecution, and which had their origin in the spirit of Christianity itself, and the practice of the apostolic ages. His counsel was followed, and the numerous social meetings which were formed, expanded afterwards into congregations.

On the retirement of Knox from Scotland, an event occurred, that showed the necessity of his withdrawing, while it called forth one of the most finished of his literary productions. The Scottish clergy, as soon as they heard of his departure, renewed that summons which formerly they had abandoned; and as he could not now appear at their citation, they formally doomed his body to the flames, and his soul to Satan, after which, they burned him in effigy at the cross of Edinburgh. Against this their iniquitous sentence he afterwards wrote his *Appellation*, and published it in 1558. The first part of this production is addressed to the Nobles, the second, to the Commons of Scotland. The appeal to the nobility, is based upon those feudal privileges, by which the aristocracy of Scotland, in their collective capacity, had been wont to regulate the authority of the sovereign, and enforce the administration of the laws; and he urged them to exert these their recognised rights, in protecting the truth

against a corrupt and usurping hierarchy, and obtaining for him an open hearing, in behalf of the cause for which he was condemned. The Second part, consisting of the Address to the Commonalty of Scotland, as being of more general and practical application, is inserted in this volume (p. 211). Previous, however, to the publication of this important work, by which the reformation in Scotland was materially advanced, the pen of Knox had been actively employed in warning, animating, and encouraging his countrymen, collectively and individually. Several of these letters were solutions of questions in casuistry, of which we have given a specimen in his Answer to Questions on Baptism, etc., (p. 253,) wherein may be seen, not only his sympathy and patience with tender consciences, but the straightforwardness with which he approached a difficulty, and the acuteness with which he solved it. Perhaps we may refer to this period also, the Sermon or Dissertation on Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness, (p. 229,) which Knox, who had preached it some time before, now transcribed, and addressed to certain pious females of his acquaintance probably in England. It was first published in London in 1583, from a manuscript belonging to Mrs. Prouze of Exeter, widow of Mr. Edward Deering, a distinguished non-conformist.

But the most important part of Knox's writings at this period, was the correspondence which took place between him and the Scottish lords, upon the subject of his returning to Scotland. They wrote, entreating him to return, with the promise of hazarding their lives and fortunes in defence of the reformation; and, conceiving that the season was ripe, he bade farewell to his flock in Geneva, and addressed himself to the



journey. But when he arrived at Dieppe, on his way to Scotland, he received letters of a different character. He was advertised, that new consultations had been held, and that the lords had drawn back. These tidings struck him with anguish, under which he sent them a letter, rebuking them for their dereliction. A short time afterwards, when his feelings had subsided, he wrote the Epistle to his Brethren in Scotland, (p. 181,) warning them against those sinful inconsistencies, from which, their enemies had been emboldened to deny that their communion formed any part of the church of Christ. This was especially the objection of the Anabaptists, who at that time were busy in Scotland, and who inculcated the most extravagant principles upon the impeccability of a true church. Knox successfully refuted their errors, by showing from Scripture, the excesses of which many professors had been guilty in former ages, even when the church of God was most pure and flourishing. About two weeks after, he wrote to the Lords professing the truth in Scotland, (p. 198,) in which letter, forgetting his late disappointment, he addressed them in a style of the utmost tenderness and affection. It is interesting to observe on this occasion also, the rooted dislike of Knox, to every species of revolt and disorder. The Protestant nobles had strong temptations at this time to join the faction of the Hamiltons against Mary of Guise, for she was now discountenancing and persecuting them. But the Reformer warns them against all resistance to the established authority in matters merely political and secular. It was only when the most urgent of emergencies had arrived, and when the highest and holiest of their privileges as Christians were subverted, that they were to merge the political

in a still more paramount duty—they were only to draw the sword for the defence of their persecuted faith, and at the command, and for the cause of God.

These earnest appeals were effectual. The Protestant lords united as one man, and resolved, in behalf of religion, to dare and endure the utmost. Knox arrived in Scotland in May, 1559, the war commenced, and superstition was driven from its strong-holds and entrenchments. The popery of Scotland backed by the troops of France rallied, and had like to have proved an overmatch, when at the suggestion of Knox, the aid of Protestant England, then under Elisabeth, was invoked against the common enemy. The request was complied with, and Europe was startled with the strange spectacle of English and Scottish soldiers fighting side by side upon their native soil. Nothing short of the all-absorbing power of religion could have swallowed up their national hatred, and united them into one people, and it was at the siege of Leith that the union of the two countries was virtually ratified. The French were expelled from Scotland, Mary of Guise died; and during the long minority which followed, the Reformation was established upon so firm a basis, that Mary Stuart, with all the aid of France and Rome, was unable to subvert it.

Closely connected with this fierce war of principles, were the circumstances under which the Sermon on Isaiah (p. 264) was preached, and the consequences that ensued. To explain these, it is necessary to advert to the marriage of the queen with Darnley, which was solemnised on the 27th of July, 1565. This rash union was succeeded by the still more imprudent step of proclaiming Darnley king, without the consent of the Estates. On account of these proceedings, the

nobles in general were jealous of one of their number so highly preferred, and indignant that he should be invested with the royal title without their sanction, while the Protestants feared, that Darnley's previous leanings to popery, would be confirmed by the blandishments of his royal bride. A civil war was the consequence, in which Edinburgh was disturbed by street conflicts; and the artillery of the castle was opened upon those who had taken up arms against the court. To lull the growing suspicions, Darnley had occasionally repaired to the sermons of the Protestant preachers; and on the 19th of August, he went up to St. Giles church in great pomp, where a throne had been prepared for him. The preacher on this occasion was Knox; the subject of his sermon was taken from Isaiah, xxvi, verses 13, 14, etc. Darnley on hearing the following quotation from Scripture, "I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them: children are their oppressors, and women rule over them;" and the passing remark of the preacher, that God punished Ahab, because he did not correct his wife, idolatrous Jezebel, imagined that himself and the queen were aimed at, and returned to the palace in a rage. On the afternoon of the same day, Knox was taken from his bed, to answer before the privy council for his alleged offence, on which occasion he was accompanied by several respectable citizens, who were anxious for his safety. On appearing before the council, he was accused of having given offence to the king, and ordered to desist from preaching, while their Majesties remained in Edinburgh. He replied, that he had spoken nothing but what was according to his text, and that if the Church would command him to speak or abstain, he would

obey, so far as the word of God allowed. The prohibition of the council was confirmed; but Knox's colleague, who was appointed to preach in his stead, refused to officiate; the towns-folks were in a state of excitement at the sentence; and the members of the town council entered so warmly into the subject, that they declared their determination, in no way to suffer the mouth of their minister to be stopped. All parties were thus involved in a difficulty, which was happily removed by the departure of the queen and Darnley from Edinburgh, a few days after; and as the prohibition was in force only during their stay, the public ministrations of the Reformer do not appear to have been suspended even for a single Sabbath. On the return of their Majesties to the capital, not a word was spoken of silencing the intrepid preacher, and he continued to labour with his wonted zeal and energy. So unconscious however was Knox of having given just ground of offence, and so desirous to make his innocence apparent to the world, that he published the sermon at the end of the same month.

The letters which are inserted at the end of this volume, will perhaps more clearly exhibit the temper and character of Knox, than his more elaborate compositions: but to understand the allusions with which they abound, it is necessary to revert to his domestic history while he resided in England. During his stay at Berwick, he contracted an acquaintanceship with Mrs. Bowes, in the course of which, a mutual attachment was formed between him and her daughter Marjory, with the approbation of the mother, who gave her hearty consent to their union. But the intended match was opposed by her husband's relatives,

and especially, by Sir Thomas Bowes, an eminent diplomatist of that period, who seems to have thought, that his family would be degraded, by the alliance of one of its members with an obscure Scot. The expressions of Knox at this unworthy treatment, were those of a man who could combine dignity of feeling and proper self-respect, with the humility and forbearance of a Christian. The marriage was postponed till a better season; but he still continued to address Mrs. Bowes, in his letters, by the endearing title of mother. At last, when no prospect appeared that the obstinate relatives would be brought to compliance, the union was solemnised; and soon after, the accession of Mary followed, and his own flight to the continent. His devoted partner, after sharing in his troubles both in Switzerland and Scotland, died in the latter country, at the close of the year 1560.

Although the pen of Knox was so indefatigable both in his political and ministerial capacity, at one time drawing up a manifesto, and at another, penning a treatise, or letter of religious consolation and advice, his published works are comparatively few; and of these, a considerable proportion seem to have been printed without his superintendence and revision. Indeed, during the Marian persecution, when the ports were carefully watched, that no heretical works might be smuggled into England, imperfect copies of the writings of eminent reformers were sometimes hurried through the press under such circumstances of concealment, that numerous errors of the printer were often added to those of the transcriber. Such has evidently been the fate of several of Knox's writings. Although most of them were published during his life-time, only a few bear the marks of his own super-

intendence. One proof also of the difficulties that attended their being printed, is to be found in their title-pages. Some have neither the printer's name, nor that of the place where they were printed; and some profess to have been printed in Rome, before the castle of St. Angelo, at the sign of St. Peter. In either case, it was an attempt to elude the inquisitors. An anonymous book might be arrested, but the unknown printer was safe; and when the searchers saw in the title-page, that the work had issued from the purlieus of the castle of St. Angelo, they let it pass without further question, thinking, that no heresy could proceed from under the guns of the papal battery. These earliest editions, which are now scarcely to be found, except in the library of the British Museum, or that of the advocates of Edinburgh, have been carefully copied for this volume, and compared, when it was possible, with more recent editions, where any sentence or expression seemed to be doubtful. Still however the work must have been prepared for the press under serious disadvantages, but for the valuable manuscript volume of Knox's works in the possession of the Rev. Thomas M'Crie, from which, the late Dr. M'Crie has quoted so frequently, in his well-known life of the Scottish Reformer. This antiquarian treasure, in which the date of 1603 incidentally occurs, appears, from the character of the penmanship, to have been written by Richard Bannatyne, the affectionate servant and secretary of John Knox; a circumstance that greatly enhances its value, by warranting its fidelity. From this source, the errors to be found in the oldest editions of the Treatise on Prayer, and the Most Wholesome Counsel, have been corrected, and the Sermon on Christ's temptation in the wilder-

ness wholly transcribed. But what is of still greater importance to mention is, that the Epistles to his Brethren in Scotland, and to the Lords professing the truth in Scotland, the Answer to questions on Baptism, etc., and the Letters at the end of this volume—all these, which form so large a portion of the whole, have been derived from the same source; and as they have not hitherto been published, this is a circumstance from which it is hoped our publication will derive additional interest. The Exposition of the Sixth Psalm in this edition will be found to differ from other printed copies: but these alterations originated, in the editor having found the first part, in a manuscript, in the British Museum, which bears every evidence of having been the original letter sent to Mrs. Bowes, and which afterwards came into the possession of Foxe the Martyrologist, the friend and correspondent of Knox. In the same collection of Foxe also, is a neatly written transcript of the Address to the Faithful in London, Newcastle, and Berwick, which on account of its superior correctness, was adopted for our version.

These circumstances are merely stated, to assure our readers of the care that has been taken to secure a superior degree of fidelity and correctness in the present publication. Not only also has there been no change or mutilation of the text, but not a single sentence or sentiment of the original has been omitted, however harsh it might appear to modern readers. With the same care, the style and phraseology of the Reformer have been scrupulously retained, the few obsolete words that occur having been explained in foot-notes, while the antiquated orthography alone has been modernised. More than this would have

been injudicious and unjust, for a slight examination will show the impropriety of tampering with that rich and impressive style. Much indeed has been said of Knox's ruggedness and want of taste, and heavy have been the allegations against him as the enemy of all refinement. But let the choice of his words and the structure of his sentences be considered—his epithets so pregnant with meaning, and the march of his language, so stately and so full of music—and it will be acknowledged, that as a writer of the old rich English tongue, he had few equals, and certainly no superior, during his own day. Nay, more than this, he not only exhibits the highest literary excellencies of his English cotemporaries, but with his characteristic good feeling and sound sense, he avoids that classical and scholastic pedantry by which their writings were so generally infected. From this circumstance, as well as from the vigour of his intellect, and straight-forwardness of his habits of thought, Knox is a writer for all time, and will be intelligible in every age—and especially to those who prize the language of the Bible. To modernise such a style, therefore, would have been to deprive it of its richness and its power, in the vain hope of improving its perspicuity; and in consequence of this, the process has not been attempted.—With these explanations, we submit our selection of Knox's practical writings to the judgment of the public.



THE  
WRITINGS OF JOHN KNOX

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TREATISE ON PRAYER.

A DECLARATION WHAT TRUE PRAYER IS, HOW WE SHOULD PRAY, AND FOR WHAT WE SHOULD PRAY; SET FORTH BY JOHN KNOX, PREACHER OF GOD'S HOLY WORD.

UNTO THE SMALL AND DISPERSED FLOCK OF JESUS CHRIST.

**P**RAYER *springeth out of true faith*, Rom., x.—How necessary is the right invocation of God's name, (otherwise called perfect prayer,) it becometh no Christian to misknow, seeing it is the very branch which springeth forth of true faith; whereof if any man be destitute, notwithstanding he be endowed with whatsoever virtues, yet in the presence of God is he reputed for no Christian at all. Therefore a manifest sign it is, that such as in prayer always are negligent, do understand nothing of perfect faith. For if the fire may be without heat, or the burning lamp without light, then true faith may be without fervent prayer. But because in times past was, (and yet, alas, with no small number is,) that reckoned to be prayer, which in the sight of God was, and is nothing less, I intend shortly to touch the circumstances thereof.

*What prayer is.*—Prayer is an earnest and familiar talking with God, to whom we declare our miseries,

whose support and help we implore and desire in our adversities, and whom we laud and praise for our benefits received. So that prayer containeth the exposition of our dolours, the desire of God's defence, and the praising of his magnificent name, as the Psalms of David clearly do teach.

*What is to be observed in prayer.*—That this be most reverently done, the consideration should provoke us in whose presence we stand, to whom we speak, and what we desire; standing in the presence of the omnipotent Creator of heaven and earth, and of all the contents thereof, to whom assist and serve a thousand thousand of angels, giving obedience to his eternal majesty; (Dan., iii; Job, xvi,) and speaking unto him who knoweth the secrets of our hearts, before whom, dissimulation and lies are always odious and hateful, and asking that thing which may be most to his glory, and to the comfort of our conscience. But diligently should we attend, that such things as may offend his godly presence, to the uttermost of our power may be removed. And first, that worldly cares and fleshly cogitations, such as draw us from contemplation of our God, be expelled from us, that we may freely without interruption call upon God. But how difficult and hard is this one thing in prayer to perform, none knoweth better, than such as in their prayers are not content to remain within the bands of their own vanity, but as it were, ravished, do intend<sup>1</sup> to a purity allowed of God; asking not such things as the foolish reason of man desireth, but that which may be pleasant and acceptable in God's presence. Our adversary, Satan, at all times compassing us about, (1 Pet., v,) is never more busy than when we address and bend ourselves

<sup>1</sup> Strive after.

to prayer. Oh, how secretly and subtilely creepeth he into our breasts ; and calling us back from God, causeth us to forget what we have to do ! So that frequently, when we with all reverence should speak to God, we find our hearts talking with the vanities of the world, or with the foolish imaginations of our own conceit. So that, without the Spirit of God supporting our infirmities, mightily making intercession for us with incessant groans which cannot be expressed with tongue, (Rom., viii.) there is no hope that we can desire any thing according to God's will.

*How the Spirit maketh intercession for us.*—I mean not that the Holy Ghost doth mourn or pray, but that he stirreth up our minds, giving unto us a desire or boldness to pray, and causeth us to mourn, when we are extracted or pulled therefrom : which things to conceive, no strength of man sufficeth, neither is able of itself. But hereof it is plain, that such as understand not what they pray, or expound not, or declare not the desire of their hearts clearly in God's presence ; and in time of prayer, to their possibility, do not expel vain cogitations from their minds, profit nothing in prayer.

*Why we should pray, and also understand what we pray.*—But some will object, and say, Albeit we understand not what we pray, yet God understandeth, who knoweth the secrets of our hearts ; he knoweth also what we need, although we expone not or declare not our necessities unto him. Such men verily declare themselves never to have understanding what perfect prayer meant, nor to what end Jesus Christ commandeth us to pray ; which is, first, that our hearts may be inflamed with continual fear, honour, and love of God, to whom we run for support and help, whensoever danger or necessity requireth ; that we so learn-

ing to notify our desires in his presence he may teach us what is to be desired, and what not. Secondly, that we knowing our petitions to be granted by God alone, to him only we must render and give laud and praise; and that we ever having his infinite goodness fixed in our minds, may constantly abide to receive that which with fervent prayer we desire. For sometimes God deferreth or prolongeth to grant our petitions, for the exercise and trial of our faith, and not that he sleepeth, or is absent from us at any time; but that with more gladness we might receive that which with long expectation we have abidden,<sup>1</sup> that thereby we, assured of his eternal providence, so far as the infirmity of our corrupt and most weak nature will permit, may not doubt but his merciful hand shall relieve us in most urgent necessity and extreme tribulation. Therefore, such men as teach us that it is not necessary whether that we understand what we pray, because God knoweth what we need, would also teach us, that neither should we honour God, nor yet refer or give unto him thanks for benefits received. For how shall we honour and praise him whose goodness and liberality we know not? And how shall we know, unless we receive, and sometimes have experience? And how shall we know that we have received, unless we know verily what we have asked?

The second thing to be observed in perfect prayer is, that standing in the presence of God, we be found such as bear reverence to his holy law, earnestly repenting our past iniquity, and intending to lead a new life; for otherwise, in vain are all our prayers, as it is written, "whoso withdraweth his ear, that he may not hear the Law, his prayer shall be abominable."

<sup>1</sup> Awaited.

(Prov., xv.) Likewise Isaiah and Jeremiah say thus : “Ye shall multiply your prayers, and I shall not hear, because your hands are full of blood ;” that is, of all cruelty and mischievous works. Also the Spirit of God appeareth by the mouth of the blind whom Jesus Christ did illuminate, by these words, “we know that God heareth not sinners ;” (John, ix,) that is, such as glory and do continue in iniquity.

*When sinners are not heard of God.*—So that of necessity true repentance must needs be had and go before perfect prayer, or sincere invocation of God’s name. And unto these two precedents must be annexed the third, which is the direction of ourselves in God’s presence, utterly refusing and casting off our own justice<sup>1</sup> with all cogitations and opinion thereof. And let us not think that we shall be heard for any thing proceeding of ourselves. For all such as advance, boast, or depend any thing upon their own righteousness, repel and hold from the presence of His mercy with the high proud Pharisee. And, therefore, the most holy men we find in prayers most dejected and humbled. David saith, “O Lord, our Saviour, help us, be merciful unto our sins for thy own sake. Remember not our old iniquities, but haste thou, O Lord, and let thy mercy prevent us.” (Psalm lxxix.) Jeremiah saith, “If our iniquities bear testimony against us, do thou according to thy own name.” And behold Isaiah, “Thou art angry, O Lord, because we have sinned, and are replenished with all wickedness, and our righteousness is like a defiled cloth. But now, O Lord, thou art our Father : we are clay ;

<sup>1</sup> Righteousness, for which the word Justice was often used at this period. Where Justice is used in this sense afterwards, we have substituted the word Righteousness, as less liable to misapprehension.

thou art the workman, and we the workmanship of thy hands. Be not angry, O Lord; remember not our iniquities for ever." (Isa., lxiv.) And Daniel, greatly commended of God, maketh in his prayer most humble confession, in these words, "We be sinners, and have offended; we have done ungodly, and fallen from thy commandment: therefore not in our own righteousness make we our prayers before thee, but thy most rich and great mercy bring we forth for us. O Lord, hear; O Lord, be merciful, and spare us, O Lord; attend, help, and cease not, my God, even for thy own name's sake; do it, for thy city and thy people are called after thy own name." (Dan., ix.) Behold, that in these prayers is no mention of their own righteousness, their own satisfaction, or their own merits; but most humble confession, proceeding from a sorrowful and penitent heart, having nothing whereupon it might depend, but the sure mercy of God alone, who had promised to be their God; that is, their help, comfort, defender, and deliverer (as he hath also done to us by Jesus Christ.) in time of tribulation. And therefore they despaired not; but after the acknowledging of their sins, called for mercy, and obtained the same. Wherefore it is plain, that such men as in their prayers have respect to any virtue proceeding of themselves, thinking thereby their prayers to be accepted, never prayed aright.

*What fasting and alms-deeds are with prayer.*—And, albeit, to fervent prayer be joined fasting, watching, and alms-deeds, yet are none of these the cause that God doth accept our prayers. But they are spurs, which suffer us not to vary; but make us more able to continue in prayer, which the mercy of God doth accept.

But here may it be objected that David prayeth, "Keep my life, O Lord, for I am holy: O Lord, save my soul, for I am innocent; and suffer me not to be confounded." (Ps. xxxviii, lxxxvi.) Also Hezekiah, "Remember, Lord, I beseech thee, that I have walked righteously before thee, and that I have wrought that which is good in thy sight." (2 Kings, xx.) These words are not spoken of men glorious, **neither** yet trusting in their own works. But herein they testify themselves to be the sons of God by regeneration; to whom he promiseth always to be merciful, and at all times to hear their prayers.

*The cause of their boldness was Jesus Christ.*—And so, their words spring from a wonted, constant, and fervent faith; surely believing, that as God of his infinite mercy had called them to his knowledge, not suffering them to walk after their own natural wickedness, but partly had taught them to conform themselves to his holy law, and that, for the promised Seed's sake, so might he not leave them destitute of comfort, consolation, and defence, in so great and extreme necessity. And so their righteousness allege they not to glory thereof, or to put trust therein, but to strengthen and confirm them in God's promises. And this consolation I would wish to all Christians, in their prayers, a testimony of a good conscience to assure them of God's promises; but to obtain what they ask, must only depend upon him, all opinion and thought of our own righteousness laid aside. And, moreover, David, in the words above, compareth himself with King Saul, and with the rest of his enemies, who wrongfully did persecute him, desiring of God that they prevail not against him—as he would say, Unjustly do they persecute me, and there-

fore, according to my innocency, defend me—for otherwise he confesseth himself most grievously to have offended God, as in the preceding places he clearly testifieth.

3

*Hypocrisy is not allowed with God.*—Thirdly, In prayer is to be observed, that what we ask of God, we must earnestly desire the same, acknowledging ourselves to be indigent and void thereof, and that God alone may grant the petition of our hearts when his good will and pleasure is. For nothing is more odious before God than hypocrisy and dissimulation; that is, when men do ask of God things whereof they have no need, or that they believe to obtain by others than by God alone. As if a man ask of God remission of his sins, thinking, nevertheless, to obtain the same by his own works, or by other men's merits, he doth mock with God and deceive himself. And, in such cases, do a great number offend, principally the mighty and rich of the earth, who, for a common custom, will pray this part of the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," that is, a moderate and reasonable sustentation; and yet, their own hearts will testify, that they need not so to pray, seeing they abound in all worldly solace and felicity. I mean not, that rich men should not pray this part of prayer: but I would they understood what they ought to pray in it, (whereof I intend after to speak,) and that they ask nothing whereof they felt not themselves marvellously indigent and needful; for unless we call in verity, He will not grant; and except we speak with our whole heart, we shall not find him.

The fourth rule necessary to be followed in prayer is, a sure hope to obtain what we ask: for nothing more offendeth God than when we ask doubting whe-



ther he will grant our petitions ; for, in so doing, we doubt if God be true, if he be mighty and good. Such, saith James, obtain nothing of God, (James, i) ; and therefore Jesus Christ commandeth, that we firmly believe to obtain whatsoever we ask, for all things are possible unto him that believeth. And therefore, in our prayers, desperation is always to be expelled. I mean not, that any man in extremity of trouble, can be without a present dolour, and without a greater fear of trouble to follow. Trouble and fear are the very spurs to prayer : for when man, compassed about with vehement calamities, and vexed with continual solicitude, having, by help of man, no hope of deliverance, with sore oppressed and punished heart, fearing also greater punishment to follow, from the deep pit of tribulation, doth call to God for comfort and support, such prayer ascendeth into God's presence, and returneth not in vain.

As David, in the vehement persecution of Saul, hunted and chased from every hole, fearing that one day or other he should fall into the hands of his persecutors, after that he had complained that no place of rest was left to him, vehemently prayed, saying, " O Lord, who art my God, in whom alone I trust, save me from them that persecute me, and deliver me from my enemies. Let not this man (meaning Saul) devour my life, as a lion doth his prey, for of none seek I comfort but of thee alone." (Psalm vii.) In the midst of these anguishes, the goodness of God sustained him, so that the present tribulation was tolerable ; and the infallible promises of God so assured him of deliverance, that fear was partly mitigated and gone, as plainly appeareth to such as diligently mark the process of his prayer. For, after long menacing and threatening made to him

of his enemy, he concludeth with these words, "The dolour which he intended to me, shall fall upon his own pate; and the violence wherewith he would have oppressed me, shall cast down his own head: but I will magnify the Lord according to his righteousness, and shall praise the name of the Most High."

*God delivereth his chosen from their enemies.*—This is not written for David only, but for all such as shall suffer tribulation, to the end of the world. For I, the writer hereof, (let this be said to the laud and praise of God alone,) in anguish of mind, and vehement tribulation and affliction, called upon the Lord, when not only the ungodly, but even my faithful brethren, yea, and my own self, that is, all natural understanding, judged my case to be irremediable. And yet, in my greatest calamity, and when my pains were most cruel, his eternal wisdom willed that my hands should write,<sup>1</sup> far contrary to the judgment of carnal reason; which his mercy hath proved true, blessed be his holy name. And therefore dare I be bold in the verity of God's word to promise, that, notwithstanding the vehemency of trouble, the long continuance thereof, the despair of all men, the fearfulness, danger, dolour, and anguish of our own hearts, yet if we call constantly to God, that, beyond expectation of all men, he shall deliver.

Let no man think himself unworthy to call and pray to God, because he hath grievously offended his majesty in times past; but let him bring to God a

<sup>1</sup> Knox, during his confinement in the French galleys, wrote a Confession of his Faith, and an account of his public disputation in St. Andrews with the Papists. He also arranged the treatise of Sir Henry Balnaves, his fellow-prisoner, entitled, "The works and conversation of a justified man," to which he wrote a preface.

sorrowful and repenting heart, saying with David, "Heal my soul, O Lord, for I have offended against thee. Before I was afflicted, I transgressed; but now let me observe thy commandments." (Ps. vi, cxix.)

To mitigate or ease the sorrows of our wounded conscience, two plaisters hath our most prudent Physician provided, to give us encouragement to pray, notwithstanding the knowledge of offences committed; that is, a Precept and a Promise. The precept or commandment to pray is universal, frequently inculcated and repeated in God's Scriptures: "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." (Matt., vii.) "Call upon me in the day of trouble." (Psal. l.) "Watch and pray, that ye fall not into temptation." (Matt., xxvi.) "I command, that ye pray ever, without ceasing." (1 Tim., ii.) "Make deprecations incessable, and give thanks in all things." (1 Thess., v.) Which commandments whoso contemneth or despiseth, doth equally sin with him that doth steal. For as this commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," is a precept negative, so "Thou shalt pray," is a commandment affirmative; and God requireth equal obedience of, and to all his commandments. Yet more boldly will I say, he who, when necessity constraineth, desireth not support and help of God, doth provoke his wrath no less than do such as make false gods, or openly deny God.

*He that prayeth not in trouble, denieth God.*—For like as it is to know no physician or medicine, or, in knowing them, refuse to use and receive the same; so, not to call upon God in thy tribulation, is like as if thou didst not know God, or else utterly deny him.

*Not to pray is a sin most odious.*—Oh, why cease we then to call instantly upon his mercy, having his

commandment so to do ! Above all our iniquities, we work manifest contempt and despising of Him, when by negligence we delay to call for his gracious support. Whoso calleth on God obeyeth his will, and findeth therein no small consolation, knowing nothing is more acceptable to his majesty than humble obedience.

To this commandment he addeth his most undoubted promise in many places: "Ask, and ye shall receive, seek, and ye shall find." (Matt., vii.) And by the prophet Jeremiah God saith, "Ye shall call upon me, and I shall hear you ; ye shall seek, and shall find me." (Jer., xxix.) And by Isaiah he saith, "May the father forget his natural son, or the mother the child of her womb ? And although they do, yet shall I not forget such as call upon me." And hereto correspond and agree the words of Jesus Christ, saying, "If ye, being wicked, can give good gifts to your children, much more my heavenly Father shall give the Holy Ghost to them that ask him." (Matt., vii.) And that we should not think God to be absent, or not to hear us, Moses occurreth, saying, "There is no nation that have their gods so adherent or nigh unto them as our God, who is present at all our prayers." (Deut., iv.) Also the Psalmist, "Near is the Lord to all that call upon him in verity." And Christ saith, "Wheresoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

*Readiness of God to hear sinners.*—That we may not think that God will not hear us, Isaiah saith, "Before ye cry I shall hear, and while they yet speak I shall answer." And also, "If at even come sorrow or calamity, before the morning spring, I shall reduce,<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Restore.

bring gladness." And these most comfortable words doth the Lord not speak to carnal Israel only, but to all men sore oppressed, abiding God's deliverance; "For a moment and a little season have I turned my face from thee, but in everlasting mercy shall I comfort thee."

*The hope to obtain our petitions, should depend upon the promises of God.*—Oh! hard are the hearts which so manifold most sweet and sure promises do not mollify, whereupon should depend the hope to obtain our petitions. The indignity or unworthiness of ourselves is not to be regarded; for albeit to the chosen who are departed, in holiness and purity of life we be far inferiors, yet in that part we are equal, in that we have the same commandment to pray, and the same promise to be heard. For his gracious majesty esteemeth not the prayer, neither granteth the petition, for any dignity or worthiness of the person that prayeth, but for his promise' sake only. And therefore, saith David, "Thou hast promised unto thy servant, O Lord, that thou wilt build a house for him; wherefore thy servant hath found in his heart to pray in thy sight. Now, even so, O Lord, thou art God, and thy words are true: thou hast spoken these good things unto thy servant. Begin therefore to do according to thy promise: multiply, O Lord, the household of thy servant." Behold, David altogether dependeth upon God's promise; as also did Jacob, who, after he had confessed himself unworthy of all the benefits received, yet durst he ask greater benefits in time to come, and that, because God hath promised. In like manner, let us be encouraged to ask whatsoever the goodness of God hath freely promised. What we should ask principally, we shall hereafter declare.

*Of necessity we must have a mediator.*—The fifth observation which godly prayer requireth is, the perfect knowledge of the advocate, intercessor, and mediator; for, seeing no man is of himself worthy to compear, or appear in God's presence, by reason that in all men continually resteth sin, which, by itself, doth offend the majesty of God, raising also debate, strife, hatred, and division betwixt his inviolable justice and us, for the which, unless satisfaction be made by another than by ourselves, so little hope resteth that any thing from him we can attain, that no surety may we have with him at all. To exeme us from this horrible confusion, our most merciful Father, knowing that our frail minds should hereby have been continually dejected, hath given unto us his only beloved Son, to be unto us righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and holiness. If in him we faithfully believe, we are so clad that we may with boldness compear and appear before the throne of God's mercy, doubting nothing, but that whatsoever we ask through our Mediator, that same we shall obtain most assuredly. Here, is most diligently to be observed, that without our Mediator, fore-speaker, and peace-maker, we enter not into prayer; for the incallings of such as pray without Jesus Christ are not only vain, but also, they are odious and abominable before God. Which thing to us in the Levitical priesthood most evidently was prefigured and declared: for as within the *sanctum sanctorum*, that is, the most holy place, entered no man but the High Priest alone, and as all sacrifices offered by any other than by priests only, provoked the wrath of God upon the sacrifice-maker; so, whoever doth intend to enter into God's presence, or to make prayers without Jesus Christ, shall find nothing but fearful judgment and

horrible damnation. Wherefore it is plain, that Turks and Jews, notwithstanding that they do apparently most fervently pray unto God who created heaven and earth, who guideth and ruleth the same, who defendeth the good and punisheth the evil, yet never are their prayers pleasant unto God; neither honour they his holy majesty in any thing, because they acknowledge not Jesus Christ. For he who honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father. For as the law is a statute that we shall call upon God, and as the promise is made that he shall hear us, so are we commanded only to call through Jesus Christ, by whom alone our petitions we obtain; for in him alone are all the promises of God confirmed and complete. Whereof, without all controversy, it is plain, that such as have called, or call presently unto God by any other mean than by Jesus Christ alone, do nothing regard God's will, but obstinately prevaricate, and do against his commandments; and therefore, obtain they not their petitions, neither yet have entrance to his mercy; "for no man cometh to the Father," saith Jesus Christ, "but by me." He is the right way: who declineth from him erreth, and goeth wrong. He is our leader, whom, unless we follow, we shall walk in darkness; and he alone is our captain, without whom, neither praise nor victory ever shall we obtain.

Against such as depend upon the intercession of saints, no otherwise will I contend, but shortly touch the properties of a perfect mediator. First, the words of Paul are most sure, that a mediator is not the mediator of one; that is, wheresoever is required a mediator, there are also two parties; to wit, one party offending, and the other party which is offended; which parties, by themselves may in no ways be recon-

ciled. Secondly, the mediator who taketh upon him the reconciling of these two parties, must be such a one as having trust and favour of both parties, yet in some things must differ from both ; and must be clean and innocent also of the crime committed against the party offended. Let this be more plain by this subsequent declaration :

*Angels may not be mediators.*—The eternal God, standing upon the one part, and all natural men descending of Adam upon the other part ; the infinite justice of God is so offended with the transgression of all men, that in no wise can amity be made, except such a one be found, as fully may make satisfaction for man's offences. Among the sons of men none was found able ; for they were all found criminal in the fault of one ; and God, infinite in justice, must abhor the society and sacrifice of sinners. And as to the angels, what might prevail their substitution for man ?<sup>1</sup> who, albeit they would have interposed themselves as mediators, yet they had not the infinite righteousness.

*Jesus Christ, God and man, is Mediator.*—Who, then, shall here be found the peace-maker ? Surely the infinite goodness and mercy of God might not suffer the perpetual loss and repudiation of his creatures ; and therefore his eternal wisdom provided such a mediator, having wherewith to satisfy the justice of God—differing also from the Godhead :—his only Son, clad in the nature of manhood, who interposed himself a mediator ; not as man only ; for the pure humanity of Christ of itself might neither make intercession nor satisfaction for us ; but God and man.

<sup>1</sup> In the original this sentence reads, " What prevailed the prevarication of man ? " *Prevarication* was probably used in a good sense, instead of a bad.



In that he is God he might complete the will of the Father; and in that he is man, pure and clean, without spot or sin, he might offer sacrifice for the purgation of our sins, and satisfaction of God's justice. For unless saints have these two, Godhead equal with the Father, and humanity without sin, the office of mediators saints may not usurp.

But here will be objected, "who knoweth not Jesus Christ to be the only mediator of our redemption? but that impedeth or hindereth nothing saints and holy men to be mediators and to make intercession for us." As though that Jesus Christ had been but one hour our mediator, and after, had resigned the office to his servants!

*Who maketh other mediators than Jesus Christ, taketh honour from him.*—Do not such men gently<sup>1</sup> entreat Jesus Christ, detracting from him such a portion of his honour? Otherwise speak the Scriptures of God, testifying him to have been made man, and to have proved our infirmities; to have suffered death willingly; to have overcome the same; and all to this end, that he might be our perpetual high sovereign Priest, into whose place or dignity none other might enter. (Heb. vi, vii, ix, x.) As John saith, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ, the righteous." (1 John, ii.) Mark well these words. John saith, "we have presently a sufficient advocate; whom Paul affirmeth to sit at the right hand of God the Father: (Rom. viii;) and to be the only Mediator between God and man; for he alone, saith Ambrose, is our mouth, by whom we speak to God: he is our eyes, by whom we see God; and also our right hand, by whom we offer any thing unto the Father;

<sup>1</sup> Handsomely, (spoken ironically).

who, unless he make intercession, neither we, neither any of the saints, may have any society or fellowship with God. What creature may say to God the Father, "Let mankind be received into thy favour; for the pain of his transgression, that have I sustained in my own body; for his cause was I encompassed with all infirmities, and so became the most contemned and despised of all men, and yet, in my mouth was found no guile nor deceit; but always obedient to thy will, suffering most grievous death for mankind. And therefore, behold not the sinner, but me, who by my infinite righteousness have perfectly satisfied for his offences"?—May any other, Jesus Christ except, in these words make intercession for sinners? If they may not, then are they neither mediators nor yet intercessors. "For albeit," saith Augustine, "Christians do commend one another unto God in their prayers, yet make they not intercession, neither dare they usurp the office of a mediator: no, not Paul, albeit under the Head he was a principal member, because he commendeth himself to the prayers of faithful men." But if any do object, such is not the condition of the saints departed, who now have put off mortality, and bear no longer the fragility of the flesh;—although I grant this to be most true, yet are they all compelled to cast their crowns before Him who sitteth on the throne, acknowledging themselves to have been delivered from great affliction, to have been purged by the blood of the Lamb; and therefore none of them do attempt to be a mediator, seeing they neither have being nor righteousness of themselves. But in so great light of the Gospel which now is beginning, (praise be to the Omnipotent!) it is not necessary upon such matter long to remain.

Some say, we will use but one mediator, Jesus Christ, to God the Father; but we must have saints, and chiefly the Virgin, the mother of Jesus Christ, to pray for us unto him.

*Against such as would have mediators to Jesus Christ.*  
—Alas! whosoever is so minded, sheweth himself plainly to know nothing of Jesus Christ rightly. Is He who descended from heaven, and vouchsafed to be conversant with sinners, commanding all sore vexed and sick to come unto him, (Matt., xi,) who, harging upon the cross, prayed first for his enemies, become now so untractable, that he will not hear us, without a person to be a mean? O Lord, open the eyes of such, that they may clearly perceive thy infinite kindness, gentleness, and love towards mankind.

Above all precedents, is to be observed, that what we ask of God, ought to be profitable to ourselves and to others, and hurtful or dangerous to no man. Secondly, we must consider whether our petitions extend to spiritual or corporal things.

Spiritual things, such as are deliverance from impiety, remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and of life everlasting, we should desire absolutely, without any condition, by Jesus Christ, in whom alone all these are promised. And in asking hereof, we should not pray thus, “O Father, forgive our sins if thou wilt;” for his will He hath expressed, saying, “As I live, I desire not the death of a sinner, but rather that he convert, and live;” which immutable and solemn oath, who calleth in doubt, maketh God a liar, and, as far as in him lieth, would spoil God of his godhead. For he cannot be God except he be eternal and infallible verity. And John saith, “This is the testimony which God hath testified of his Son, that

who believeth in the Son, hath eternal life, (1 John, v.) to the verity whereof we should steadfastly cleave, although worldly dolour apprehend us — as David exiled from his kingdom, and deprived of all his glory, secluded not himself from God, but steadfastly believed reconciliation by the promise made, notwithstanding that all creatures on earth had refused, rejected, and rebelled against him, Happy is the man whom thou shalt inspire, O Lord!

In asking corporal things, first, let us enquire, if we be at peace with God in our consciences, by Jesus Christ, firmly believing our sins to be remitted in his blood. Secondly, let us enquire of our own hearts, if we know temporal riches or substance not to come to man by accident, fortune, or chance, neither yet by the industry and diligence of man's labour; but to be the liberal gift of God only, whereof we ought to laud and praise his goodness, wisdom, and providence alone.

*What should be prayed for.*—And if this we do truly acknowledge and confess, let us boldly ask of Him whatsoever is necessary for us; as sustentation of the body, health thereof, defence from misery, deliverance from trouble, tranquillity and peace to our commonwealth, prosperous success in our vocations, labours, and affairs, whatsoever they be; which God willeth we ask all of Him, to certify us that all things stand in his government and disposal; and also, by asking and receiving these corporal commodities, we may have taste of his sweetness, and be inflamed with his love, that thereby our faith of reconciliation and remission of our sins may be exercised and take increase.

But, in asking such temporal things, we must observe, first, that if God deferreth or prolongeth to grant our petitions, even so long that he doth appar-

ently reject us, yet let us not cease to call, prescribing him neither time, neither manner of deliverance: as it is written, "If he prolong time, abide patiently upon him:" and also, "Let not the faithful be too hasty; for God sometimes deferreth, and will not hastily grant, for the probation of our continuance," as the words of Jesus Christ testify: and also that we may receive with greater gladness that, which with ardent desire we long have looked for—as Hannah, Sarah, and Elizabeth, after great ignominy of their barrenness and sterility, received fruit of their bosoms with joy.

Secondly, because we know the kirk at all times to be under the cross; in asking temporal commodities, and especially deliverance from trouble, let us offer to God obedience; if it shall please his goodness we be longer exercised, that we may patiently abide it. As David, desirous to be restored to his kingdom, what time he was exiled by his own son, offereth unto God obedience, saying, "If I have found favour in the presence of the Lord, he shall bring me home again. But if He shall say, Thou pleasest me no longer to bear authority, I am obedient; let him do what seemeth good to him." (2 Sam., xv.) And the three children unto Nebuchadnezzar did say, "We know that our God whom we worship may deliver us; but if it shall not please him so to do, let it be known to thee, O king, that thy gods we will not worship." (Dan., iii.)

*Better it is to obey God than man.*—Here the [children] gave a true confession of their perfect faith, knowing nothing to be impossible to the omnipotence of God; affirming also themselves to stand in his mercy; for otherwise, the nature of man could not

willingly give itself to so horrible a torment. But they offer unto God most humble obedience, to be delivered at his good pleasure and will ; as we should do in all afflictions ; for we know not what to ask or desire as we ought, that is, the frail flesh oppressed with fear and pain, desireth deliverance, ever abhorring and drawing back from obedience-giving. (O Christian brother, I write by experience !) But the Spirit of God calleth back the mind to obedience, that albeit it desires and abides for deliverance, yet should it not repine against the good will of God, but incessantly to ask that it may abide with patience. How hard this battle is no man knoweth, but he who in himself hath suffered trial.

*The petition of the spirit.*—It is to be noted, that God sometimes doth grant the petition of the spirit, while he yet deferreth the desire of the flesh. As who doubteth but God did mitigate the heaviness of Joseph, although he sent not hasty deliverance in his long imprisonment ; and that, as he gave him favour in the sight of his jailor, so, inwardly also, he gave him consolation in spirit ? (Gen., xxxix.) And moreover, God sometimes granteth the petition of the spirit, while he utterly repelleth the desire of the flesh. For the petition of the spirit always is, that we may attain to the true felicity, whereunto we must needs enter by tribulation, and the final death, both of which the nature of man doth ever abhor. And therefore the flesh under the cross, and at the sight of death, calleth and thirsteth for hasty deliverance.

*The flesh striveth against the spirit.*—But God who alone knoweth what is expedient for us, sometimes prolongeth the deliverance of his chosen, and sometimes permitteth them to drink, before the maturity

of age, the bitter cup of corporal death, that thereby, they may receive medicine, and cure from all infirmity. For who doubteth, but that John the Baptist desired to have seen more the days of Jesus Christ. and to have been longer with him in conversation? Or that Stephen would not have laboured more days in preaching Christ's gospel, whom nevertheless he suffered hastily to taste of this general sentence? And albeit we see therefore no apparent help to ourselves, nor yet to others afflicted, let us not cease to call, thinking our prayers to be vain; for whatsoever come of our bodies, God shall give unspeakable comfort to the spirit, and turn all to our commodities,<sup>1</sup> beyond our own expectation. The cause I am so long tedious in this matter is, that I know how hard the battle is between the spirit and the flesh, under the heavy cross of affliction where no worldly defence but present death does appear.

*Impediments come of the weakness of the flesh.*—I know the grudging and murmuring complaints of the flesh; I know the anger, wrath, and indignation which it conceiveth against God, calling all his promises in doubt, and being ready every hour utterly to fall from God. Against which, remains only faith, provoking us to call earnestly, and pray for assistance of God's Spirit; wherein, if we continue, our most desperate calamities he shall turn to gladness and to a prosperous end.

To thee, O Lord, alone be praise, for with experience I write this and speak.

Where, and for Whom, and at what Time, we ought to pray, is not to be passed over with silence.

Private prayer, such as men secretly offer unto God

<sup>1</sup> Advantages.

by themselves, requires no special place ; although Jesus Christ commandeth, when we pray, to enter into our chamber, and to close the door, and so, to pray secretly unto our Father. (Matt., vi.) Whereby He wills, that we should choose for our prayers such places as might offer least occasion to call us back from prayer, and also, that we should expel forth of our minds in time of our prayer, all vain cogitations ; for otherwise, Jesus Christ himself doth observe no special place of prayer ; for we find him sometimes praying in Mount Olivet, sometimes in the desert, sometimes in the temple, and in the garden. Peter desireth to pray upon the top of the house. (Acts, x.) Paul prayed in prison, and was heard of God ; who also commandeth men to pray in all places. lifting up unto God pure and clean hands ; as we find that the prophets and most holy men did, wheresoever danger or necessity required.

*Appointed places to pray in may not be neglected.*— But public and common prayers should be used in the place appointed for the assembly of the congregation, whence whosoever negligently withdraweth himself is in nowise excusable. I mean not that to be absent from that place is sin, because that place is more holy than another ; for the whole earth created by God is equally holy. But the promise made, that “ whosoever two or three are gathered together in my name, there shall I be in the midst of them,” condemneth all such as despise the congregation gathered in his name. But mark well this word “ gathered.” I mean not to hear piping, singing, or playing ; nor to patter upon beads or books whereof they have no understanding ; nor to commit idolatry, honouring that for God which indeed is no god ; for with such, will I neither join



myself in common prayer, nor in receiving external sacraments. For in so doing, I should affirm their superstition and abominable idolatry, which I, by God's grace, never will do, neither counsel others to do, to the end.

*What it is to be gathered in the name of Christ.*—This congregation which I mean, should be gathered in the name of Jesus Christ; that is, to laud and magnify God the Father, for the infinite benefits they have received by his only Son, our Lord. In this congregation should be distributed the mystical and Last Supper of Jesus Christ, without superstition or any more ceremonies than he himself used, and his apostles after him, in distribution thereof. In this congregation, should inquisition be made of the poor among them, and support provided till the time of their next convention; and it should be distributed amongst them. Also in this congregation should be made common prayers, such as all men hearing might understand, that the hearts of all subscribing to the voice of one, might with unfeigned and fervent mind say, Amen. Whosoever withdraw themselves from such a congregation, (but alas! where shall it be found?) do declare themselves to be no members of Christ's body.

*For whom, and at what time we should pray.*—Now there remaineth for whom, and at what time we shall pray. For all men, and at all times, doth Paul command that we shall pray (1 Tim., ii), and principally, for such as are of the household of faith as suffer persecution; and for commonwealths tyrannously oppressed, incessantly should we call, that God of his mercy and power will withstand the violence of such tyrants.

*God's sentence may be changed.*—And when we see

the plagues of God, as hunger, pestilence, or war coming or appearing to reign, then should we with lamentable voices, and repenting hearts call unto God, that it would please his infinite mercy to withdraw his hand. Which thing, if we do unfeignedly, he will without doubt, revoke his wrath, and, in the midst of his fury, think upon mercy, as we are taught in the Scripture, by his infallible and eternal verity. As in Exodus God saith, "I shall destroy this nation from the face of the earth." And when Moses addresseth himself to pray for them the Lord proceedeth, saying, "Suffer me that I may utterly destroy them." And then Moses falleth down upon his face, and forty days continueth in prayer for the safety of the people, for whom, at the last, he obtained forgiveness. David, in the vehement plague, lamentably called unto God (2 Sam., xxiv); and the king of Nineveh saith, "who can tell? God may turn and repent, and cease from his fierce wrath, that we perish not." (Jonah, iii.) Which examples and scriptures are not written in vain, but to certify us that God of his own native goodness will mitigate his plagues, by our prayers offered by Jesus Christ, although he hath threatened to punish, or is presently punishing: which he testifies by his own words, saying, "If I have prophesied against any nation or people, that they shall be destroyed, if they repent of their iniquity, it shall repent me of the evil which I have spoken against them." (Jerem., xviii.) This I write, lamenting the great coldness of men who under such long scourges of God, are nothing kindled to prayer by repentance, but carelessly sleep in a wicked life, even as though their continuing wars, urgent famine, daily plagues of pestilence, and other contagious, insolent, and strange maladies, were not

the present signs of God's wrath provoked by our iniquities.

*A plague threatened to England.*—O England, let thy intestine battle and domestic murder provoke thee to purity of life, according to the word which openly hath been proclaimed in thee, otherwise, the cup of the Lord's wrath thou shalt drink. The multitude shall not escape, but shall drink the dregs, and have the cup broken upon their heads; for judgment becometh in the house of the Lord, and commonly the least offender is first punished, to provoke the more wicked to repentance. But, O Lord, infinite in mercy, if thou shalt punish, make not consummation; but cut away the proud and luxuriant branches which bear not fruit, and preserve the commonwealths of such as give succour and harbour to thy contemned messengers, who long have suffered exile in the desert. And let thy kingdom shortly come, that sin may be ended, death devoured, thy enemies confounded; that we thy people, by thy majesty delivered, may obtain everlasting joy and felicity through Jesus Christ our Saviour, to whom be all honour and praise for ever. Amen. Hasten Lord, and tarry not.

JOHN KNOX.

*Here after followeth a Confession by John Knox,* Minister of Christ's most sacred Evangel, upon the death of that most virtuous and most famous king, Edward VI, King of England, France, and Ireland; in which confession, the said John doth accuse no less his own offences, than the offences of others, to be the cause of the away-taking of that most godly prince, now reigning with Christ, while we abide plagues for our unthankfulness.

Omnipotent and everlasting God, Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ, who by thy eternal providence disposest kingdoms as seemeth best to thy wisdom: we acknowledge and confess thy judgments to be righteous, in that thou hast taken from us, for our ungratitude, and for abusing of thy most holy word, our native king and earthly comforter. Justly mayest thou pour forth upon us the uttermost of thy plagues, for that we have not known the day and time of our merciful visitation. We have contemned thy word, and despised thy mercies: we have transgressed thy laws, for deceitfully have we wrought every man with our neighbour; oppression and violence we have not abhorred, charity hath not appeared among us, as our profession requireth. We have little regarded the voices of thy prophets; thy threatenings we have esteemed vanity and wind. So that in us, as of ourselves, rests nothing worthy of thy mercies, for all are found fruitless, even the princes with the prophets as withered trees, apt and meet to be burned in the fire of thy eternal displeasure.

But, O Lord, behold thy own mercy and goodness, that thou mayest purge and remove the most filthy burden of our most horrible offences. Let thy love overcome the severity of thy judgments, even as it did in giving to the world thy only Son, Jesus, when all mankind was lost, and no obedience was left in Adam nor in his seed. Regenerate our hearts, O Lord, by the strength of the Holy Ghost: convert thou us, and we shall be converted: work thou in us unfeigned repentance, and move thou our hearts to obey thy holy laws.

Behold our troubles and apparent destruction, and stay the sword of thy vengeance before it devour us. Place above us, O Lord, for thy great mercies' sake,

such a head, with such rulers and magistrates, as fear thy name, and will the glory of Christ Jesus to spread. Take not from us the light of thy Evangel, and suffer no papistry to prevail in this realm. Illuminate the heart of our sovereign lady, Queen Mary, with pregnant gifts of thy Holy Ghost, and inflame the hearts of her council with thy true fear and love. Repress thou the pride of those that would rebel, and remove from all hearts the contempt of thy word. Let not our enemies rejoice at our destruction, but look thou to the honour of thy own name, O Lord, and let thy Gospel be preached with boldness in this realm. If thy justice must punish, then punish our bodies with the rod of thy mercy. But, O Lord, let us never revolt, nor turn back to idolatry again. Mitigate the hearts of those that persecute us, and let us not faint under the cross of our Saviour; but assist us with the Holy Ghost, even to the end.

## LETTER TO THE FAITHFUL IN ENGLAND.

JOHN KNOX TO THE FAITHFUL IN LONDON, NEWCASTLE, AND BERWICK, AND TO ALL OTHERS WITHIN THE REALM OF ENGLAND THAT LOVE THE COMING OF OUR LORD JESUS, WISHETH CONTINUANCE IN GODLINESS TO THE END.

WHEN I remember the fearful threatenings of God pronounced against realms and nations to whom the light of God's word hath been offered, and contemptuously by them refused, as my heart unfeignedly mourneth for your present state, dearly beloved in our Saviour, Jesus Christ, so the whole powers both of body and soul tremble and shake, for the plagues that are to come. But that God's true word hath been offered to the realm of England, none can deny, except such as by the devil holden in bondage, (2 Tim., ii,) (God justly so punishing their proud disobedience,) have neither eyes to see, nor understanding to discern, good from bad, nor darkness from light. Against whom at this present no otherwise will I contend than did the prophet Jeremiah, against the stiff-necked and stubborn people of Judah, saying, "The wrath of the Lord shall not be turned away, till he have fulfilled the thoughts of his heart." (Jer., xxiii.) And thus I leave them, as those of whose repentance there is small hope, to the hands of Him who shall not forget their horrible blasphemies spoken in despite of Christ's truth, and of his true ministers.

And with you that unfeignedly mourn for the great shipwreck of God's true religion, I purpose to

communicate such counsel and admonition, now, by my rude pen, as sometimes<sup>1</sup> it pleased God I did proclaim in your ears. The end of which my admonition is, that even as you purpose and contend to avoid God's vengeance both in this life, and in the life to come, that so you avoid and flee, as well in body as in spirit, all fellowship and society with idolaters in their idolatry. You shrink, I know, even at the first. But if an orator had the matter in handling, he would prove it honest, profitable, easy, and necessary to be done; and in every one point, there would be store enough for a long oration. But as I never laboured to persuade any man in matters of religion, (God I take to record in my conscience,) except by the very simplicity and plain infallible truth of God's word, so, no more intend I to do in this behalf. But this I affirm, that to flee from idolatry is so profitable and so necessary for a Christian, that unless he so do, all worldly profit turneth to his perpetual disprofit and condemnation. Profit appertaineth either to the bodies, or else to the souls of ourselves and our posterity: Corporal commodities consist in such things as man chiefly coveteth for the body, as riches, estimation, long life, health, and quietness on earth: the only comfort and joy of the soul, is God, by his word expelling ignorance, sin, and death, and in place of these, planting true knowledge of Himself, and with the same, justice and life, by Christ Jesus his Son. If any of these aforesaid move us, then of necessity it is, that we avoid idolatry; for plain it is, that the soul hath neither life nor comfort, but by God alone, (1 Cor., vi,) with whom idolaters have no other fellowship nor participation, than have the devils. And albeit that abominable idolaters for a moment triumph, yet the hour approacheth,

<sup>1</sup> Formerly.

when God's vengeance shall strike not only their souls, but even their vile carcasses shall be plagued, as God before hath threatened. Their cities shall be burned, their lands shall be laid waste, their enemies shall dwell in their strongholds, their wives and daughters shall be defiled, their children shall fall by the edge of the sword; mercy shall they find none, because they have refused the God of all mercy, when lovingly and long he called upon them. (Lev., xxvi.) You would know the time, and what certainty I have hereof. To God will I appoint no time, but that these, and more plagues, shall fall upon England, and that ere it be long, I am as sure as that my God liveth.

This my affirmation shall displease many, and content few. God, who knoweth the secrets of all hearts, knoweth, that it also displeaseth myself. And yet, like as before, I have been compelled to speak in your audience, and in audience of others, such things as were not pleasant to the ears of men, whereof, alas! a great part this day are come to pass, so I am compelled now to write with the tears of my eyes, I know, to your displeasure. But, dear brethren, be subject to God, and give place to his wrath, that ye may escape his everlasting vengeance. My pen, I trust, shall now be no more vehement than my tongue hath been oftener than once, not only before you, but also before the chief of the realm. What was said in Newcastle and Berwick before the Sweat,<sup>1</sup> I trust yet some in those places bear in mind. What, upon the day of All-saints, the year that the Duke of Som-

<sup>1</sup> That is, the Sweating Sickness, which made great havoc in England from April to August, 1551. It generally carried off its victims in a few hours, and chiefly attacked robust men between the ages of thirty and forty. It is said also by Holinshed and other historians, that even Englishmen dwelling in foreign countries were attacked by



erset was last apprehended, let Newcastle witness. What before him that then was Duke of Northumberland, in the town of Newcastle, and other places more; what before the King's majesty, at Windsor, Hampton Court, and Westminster; and finally, what was spoken in London, in more places than one, when fires of joy and riotous banqueting were made at the proclamation of Mary, your queen. If men will not speak, yet the stones and timber of those places shall cry in fire, and bear record, that the truth was spoken, and shall absolve me in that behalf in the day of the Lord.

Suspect not, brethren, that I delight in your calamities, or in the plagues that shall fall upon the unthankful nation. No, God I take to record, that my heart mourneth within me, and that I am cruciated with remembrance of your troubles. But if I should cease, then should I do against my conscience, as also against my knowledge, and so, should I be guilty of the blood of those that perished for lack of admonition, (Ezek., xxxiii,) and yet shall the plague not a moment the longer be delayed: for the Lord hath appointed the day of his vengeance, before the which, he sendeth his trumpets and his messengers, that his elect watching with prayers and sobriety, may by his mercy escape the vengeance that shall come.

But now, you would know the grounds of my certitude. God grant, that hearing them, you may understand and steadfastly believe the same. My assurances are not the marvels of Merlin,<sup>1</sup> neither yet the

it, while the natives were exempted; a circumstance which made the disease be regarded as an exclusive judgment upon the English nation.

<sup>1</sup> A fabulous British magician of the fifth century, of whom the most extravagant tales were invented.

dark sentences of profane prophets; but 1. the plain truth of God's holy word; 2. the immutable justice of the ever-living God; and 3. the ordinary course of his plagues from the beginning, are my assurances and grounds. God's word threateneth destruction to the disobedient (Deut., xxviii): his immutable justice must require the same (Jerem., v); the ordinary punishments and plagues show examples. (Amos, iii.) What man, then, having understanding, can cease to prophesy?

The word of God plainly speaketh, that if a man shall hear the curses of God's law, and yet in his heart shall promise to himself felicity and good luck, thinking he shall have peace, although he walk after the imaginations of his own will and heart, to such a man the Lord will not be merciful, but his wrath shall be kindled against him, and He shall destroy his name from under heaven. (Jerem., xxix.) How the Lord threateneth plague after plague, and ever the last to be the sorest, till finally he will consume realms and nations if they repent not, read chapter xxvi of Leviticus, which chapter oft I have willed you to mark, as yet I do unfeignedly. And think not that it appertaineth to the Jews only. No, brethren; the prophets are the interpreters of the law, and they make the plagues of God common to all offenders, the punishment ever beginning at the household of God. And here, I must touch a point of the devilish confession made, alas! by that miserable man,<sup>1</sup> whose name, for sorrow, I cannot recite. This argument he useth, to prove the doctrine of late years taught

<sup>1</sup> The unprincipled Duke of Northumberland, who, after patronising the Reformation in England for his own selfish ends, died on the scaffold a Papist.

among you to be wicked. "Troubles and plagues, (saith he,) have followed the same, not only here in England, but also in Germany"—as he willeth you to mark. This fragile and vain argument no otherwise will I labour to confute than by plain Scripture, declaring, that plagues appertain to all inobedient, beginning first where God's mercies have been offered and refused; and that may answer the blind rage of ignorants.

The prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, after they had proclaimed plagues to fall upon the people of Israel, and upon the house of Judah, prophesy particularly against certain nations and cities, not only adjacent in circuit about Jerusalem, but also against such as were far distant; as against Moab, Ammon, Palestine, Egypt, Tyre, Damascus, and Babylon. (Isa., xiii, xv, xvii, xviii, xix, xx, xxiii; Jer., i, li; Ezek., xxv, xxvi, xxvii.) And in conclusion, general prophecies are spoken against all inobedient and sinful nations, as in chapter xxiv of Isaiah plainly appeareth; as also, the Lord commanding Jeremiah to give the cup of His wrath to all nations, one after another; who should drink of the same, although they refused it of his hand (Jer., xxv): that is, albeit they would not believe the voice of the prophet, yet should they not escape the plagues that he spake: "For every nation like unto this, shall I punish, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Jerem., v.) With the same agreeth Amos. saying, "The eyes of the Lord are upon every sinful nation, to root it out of the earth." (Amos, ix.) These, and many more places, evidently prove, that the plagues spoken of in the law of God, appertain to every rebellious people, be they Jew or be they Gentile, Christians in title, or Turks in profession. And

the ground of the prophets was the same, which before I have rehearsed for my assurances that England shall be plagued; which is, God's immutable and inviolable justice, that cannot spare in one realm, and nation, those offences that most severely he hath punished in another: for so were he unequal, and to make differences, as touching execution of his just judgments betwixt person and person; which is most contrarious to the integrity of his justice. Thus he speaketh by Jeremiah his prophet, "Behold I have begun to punish in the house where my name is incalled; and shall I spare the rest? (Jerem., xxv.) As if the Lord would say, "How can my justice permit those crimes unpunished in proud contemners that neither regard me nor yet my law, seeing I have not spared my own people, that externally bear some reverence to my name?"

That God hath punished other realms and nations, men of small understanding will easily confess. But whether like crimes have been, and yet are committed within the realm of England, as were before the last plagues of God among those nations; that is to be enquired. In this case, nothing can better instruct us, than God's plain word rebuking the vices that reigned in those days. And omitting all such as prophesied before, it shall suffice for this time to rehearse some places of Jeremiah, the time of whose prophecy well considered, shall make the matter more sensible. He beginneth in the 13th year of the reign of King Josiah, and continueth till after the destruction of Jerusalem, which came in the 11th year of Zedekiah. Long preached this godly man, to wit, thirty-nine years and six months, before the uttermost of the plagues overtook this stubborn nation; and he preached

with much trouble and injury sustained, as in his prophecies is to be seen. By all likelihood then, there were some careless ones that were not pleased with the prophet, neither yet with his preaching. And yet it is plain, that no king so truly turned to God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength, according to the law of Moses, as did Josiah. And yet, as we have said, the prophet of God was troubled, and that not by a mean number; for I find him complain universally and generally, upon the people's iniquity. For thus he introduces God speaking: "My people have committed double iniquity; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns that can hold no water. Why wilt thou justify thyself? Under thy wings is found the blood of the souls of the poor innocents, whom thou found not in corners; and yet thou sayest, I am innocent. Thou hast gotten an whore's forehead, thou canst not think shame. My people are foolish, they know me not; they are foolish children, and have no wisdom; wise they are to commit mischief, but to do good they are altogether ignorant. Every man may beware of his neighbour, and no man assuredly may trust his brother; for every man is become deceitful; they have practised their tongues to lies and guile. They have left my law (saith the Lord), and have followed the wicked imaginations of their own hearts; they have followed after Baalim, whom their fathers taught them." (Jeremiah, ii, iii, iv, ix.) Of these, and of many more like places, the general offences of that people appear to have been, desertion from God, shedding of innocent blood, justification of themselves, and defence of their iniquity, while yet they abounded in rapine,

murder, oppression, lies, crafty practice, deceit, and manifest idolatry; following the trade of their fathers, who under Manasseh and Ammon, (of whom the one in the beginning, the other all his life maintained idolatry,) had been the ringleaders of all abomination.

The prophet of God wondering at so manifest iniquity, judged that such ignorance and disobedience was only among the rascal<sup>1</sup> sort; and therefore he saith, "These be but poor ones: they are foolish; they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God. I will go to the nobles, and I will talk with them, for they know the way of their Lord, and the judgments of their God." (Jerem., v.) But what he finds among them, he declareth in these words, "They have all broken the yoke; they have heaped sin upon sin, and one mischief upon another: from the least into the most, all are bent upon avarice, and gape for lucre; from the priest to the prophet, every man dealth deceitfully. Behold their ears be uncircumcised, they cannot advert. The word of God is a rebuke into them; they delight not in it. They have committed abominable mischief." (Jerem., vi.) What this abomination was, God showeth to Ezekiel. (Ezek., viii.) All had forsaken God in their hearts, in so much, that a great number openly had turned their backs unto God, and made sacrifice to the Sun, every man in his own secret closet; yea, women mourned, for that they were not permitted to commit open abomination. Is it not to be wondered at, that all estates were so corrupt under so godly a prince? But our prophet Jeremiah proceedeth in his complaint, saying, "They cannot repent, neither yet

<sup>1</sup> Lower sort, the mob.

think shame. They have denied the Lord, and said. It is not he; we shall neither see sword nor hunger." (Jeremiah, v.) You hear the obedience that the prophet found among the princes of Judah. And yet, I say, is it not to be wondered at, that the vineyard which was so well manured, brought forth no better grapes? They had a king most godly-minded; they had prophets (for Jeremiah was not alone,) most faithful and fervent. They were admonished by diverse plagues, and always the prophets called for repentance. And yet followed nothing but open contempt of God and of his messengers. Their repentance was like the morning dew, it remained not. Although they could say with their mouths, "The Lord liveth," yet were their oaths nothing but lies. "Find me one man that doth equity and justice, and to him will I be merciful, saith the Lord." (Jerem., v.) Here was narrow and sharp inquisition among so great a multitude:—belike there had not been very many, when He that knoweth the secret thoughts searcheth so diligently. But before we proceed further in this matter, it shall be profitable to see, how these precedents agree with our state and time.

And First, that we had not God's word offered to us, will none except an arrant papist allege. We had a king<sup>1</sup> of so godly a disposition towards virtue, and chiefly towards God's truth, that none from the beginning surpassed him, and to my knowledge, none of his years did ever match him in that behalf, if he might have been but master of his own will. During this time, if sins did abound, let every man accuse his own conscience; for here I am not minded to specify all that I know, neither yet is it necessary, seeing

<sup>1</sup> Edward VI.

some crimes were so manifest and so heinous, that the earth could not hide the innocent blood, nor yet could the heavens without shame behold the craft, the deceit, the violence, and wrong, that were wrought openly. And in the meantime, the hand of God was busy over us, and his true messengers kept not silence. You know that the realm of England was visited with strange plagues; and whether it was not ever prophesied, that worse plagues were to follow, I appeal to the testimony of your own conscience. But what ensued upon this? Alas! I am ashamed to rehearse it—universal contempt of all godly admonitions, hatred of those who rebuked their vices, authorising of such as could invent most villany against the preachers of God. In this matter I may be admitted for a sufficient witness; for I heard and saw, I understood and knew with sorrow of heart, the manifest contempt, and the crafty devices of the devil against those most godly and learned preachers, that this last Lent (A.D. 1553,) were appointed to preach before the king's majesty; as also, against all others, whose tongues were not tempered by the holy water of the court:—to speak it plainly, who flattering against their own conscience, could not say that all was well, and that nothing needed reformation.

What reverence and audience was given to preachers this last Lent, by such as then were in authority, their own countenances declared: assuredly even such, as was given to Jeremiah. They hated such as rebuked their vice, and stubbornly they said, "We will not amend." And yet, how boldly their sins were rebuked, even in their faces, such as were present can witness with me. There were almost none who did not prophesy, and plainly speak the plagues that are



begun, and assuredly shall end. Master Grindal plainly spake the death of the king's majesty, complaining upon his household servants, who neither feared to rail against the word of God, nor against the true preachers of the same. That godly and fervent man, Master Lever, plainly spake the desolation of this commonwealth. And Master Bradford (whom God for Christ his Son's sake comfort to the end,) spared not the proudest of them, but boldly declared, that God's vengeance should shortly strike those that were in authority; because they loathed and abhorred the true word of the everlasting God; and willed them to take example by the late Duke of Somerset, who became so cold in hearing God's word, that the year before his death, he would go to visit his masons, and yet would not incommode himself to go from his gallery to his hall, for hearing of a sermon. "God punished him," said that godly preacher, "and that suddenly; and shall he spare you, that are doubly more wicked? No, he shall not: will ye or will ye not, ye shall drink the cup of the Lord's wrath. The judgment of the Lord! the judgment of the Lord!" he cried with a lamentable voice, and weeping tears. Master Haddon most learnedly opened the causes of the bypast plagues, and assured them, that the worse was to come after, if repentance were not shortly found. Much more I heard of these four, and of others, which now I may not rehearse, and that, (which is to be noted,) after that the whole council had said, they would hear no more of their sermons; they were indiscreet fellows, yea, and prating knaves. But I will not speak all; for if God continue me in this trouble, I purpose to prepare a dish for such as then led the ring, yea, and who but they? but now

they have been at the school of Placebo,<sup>1</sup> and there they have learned amongst ladies, to dance as the devil lists to pipe. Against those whom God hath stricken, seeing now there remaineth to them no place of repentance, I do not intend to speak; but such as live to this day must be admonished, that He who hath punished the one will not spare the rest.

But to our matter—these precedents I judge sufficient to prove this our age to have been, and yet to remain, like wicked (if it be not worse,) with the time of Jeremiah. Now, let us search what followed in Judah:—mischief upon mischief, notwithstanding the continual and long crying of the prophets; till finally, God in his anger took away good king Josiah, because He was determined to destroy Judah, as before he had destroyed Israel. (2 Kings, xxiii.) After the death of this godly king, great was the trouble, diverse and sudden were the alterations in that commonwealth. Three kings taken prisoners one after another in short space, what were the other miseries of that stubborn nation, O God, for thy great mercy's sake, let never thy small and troubled flock within the realm of England learn by experience! But in all those troubles, no repentance appeared, as by the prophet ye may learn: for thus he crieth, “Thou hast stricken them, O Lord, but they have not mourned; thou hast destroyed them, but they have not received discipline. (Jerem., v, Isa., i.) They have hardened their faces harder than stones; they will not convert. The whole land is wasted, but no man will ponder, nor consider the cause; this people will not hear my words. They walk in the wicked invention of their own hearts, they go after other gods to worship and

<sup>1</sup> A word frequently used at this time to designate a court-flatterer.

serve them." (Jerem., xii, xiii.) And of the prophet's natural friends of the men of Anathoth, some plainly said, "Speak no more to us in the name of the Lord, lest thou die in our hands." Belike these men had little inclination towards God's prophet. But yet shall a sermon, (and that which followed,) made in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, make evident and better known, how much the people were bent to idolatry, and to hear false prophets, after the death of their good king. The prophet is commanded by God, to stand in the court or entrance of the Lord's house, and to speak to all the cities of Judah that then came to worship in the house of the Lord; and is commanded to keep no word back; "if peradventure," saith the Lord, "they will hearken, and turn every man from his wicked way." The tenor of his sermon is this: "Thus saith the Lord, if ye will not obey me, to walk in my laws which I have given you, and to hear the words of my servants, the prophets, whom I sent unto you, rising up betimes, and still sending; if you will not hear them, I say, then will I do to this house, as I did unto Shiloh, and I will make this city to be abhorred of all the people in the earth." (Jerem., xxvi.) "Hear not the words of the prophets, that say unto you, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon. I have not sent them, saith the Lord, howbeit they are bold to prophesy lies in my name. If you give ear unto them, both you and your false prophets shall perish." (Jerem., xxvii.)

Here is first to be noted, that the people were already entered into iniquity, and especially (straight after the death of their king,) into idolatry, from which the Lord by his prophet laboured to call them back, threatening them with desolation, if they pro-

ceeded to rebel. Secondly, it is to be observed, that among them were false prophets. Not that they were so known and holden of the people: no, they were holden and esteemed (for so they boasted themselves to be) the true church of God, that could not err; for how should the law perish from the mouth of the priest? (Jerem., xviii.) These false prophets were maintainers of idolatry, and boldly promised to the people prosperity and good luck, wherewith the people were so abused and blinded, that the words of Jeremiah did rather harden their hearts, than provoke any to repentance, as the consequences declared: for this sermon ended, the priests, prophets, and the whole people apprehended Jeremiah, and with one voice cried, "He is worthy of death!" Great was the uproar against the poor prophet, in which, apparently, he could not have escaped the death, if the princes of Judah had not hastily come from the king's house into the temple, and had taken upon them the hearing of the cause. In which, after much debate, while some defended, and some accused the prophet most vehemently, the text saith, that the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that he should not be given into the hands of the people, to be killed. (Jerem., xxvi.)

Hereof you may easily consider, beloved brethren, what were the manners of that wicked generation, immediately after the death of their good king, and how they were encouraged to idolatry by false prophets. But in all this time the prophet ceaseth not most faithfully to execute his office. For although after this, he might not enter into the temple, (for he was forbidden to preach,) yet at God's commandment, he writeth his sermons, and

causeth them to be openly read in the temple; (alas! I fear we lack Baruch :) and afterwards, they came to the ears of the council, and at last, to the king. And although in despite they were once burnt, yet is Jeremiah commanded to write again, and boldly to say, "Jehoiakim shall have no seed, that ever shall sit upon the seat of David: their carrion shall be cast to the heat of the day, and to the frost in the night: and I shall visit, saith the Lord, the iniquity of him, of his seed, and of his servants; and I shall bring upon them, upon the dwellers in Jerusalem, and upon all Judah, all the calamities that I have spoken against them." (Jer., xxxvi.) Although, when these words were spoken and written, they were so contemned and despised, that they durst cry, "Let the counsel of the holy One of Israel come, we will follow the devices of our own hearts;" (Jerem., xviii;) yet no words of his threatenings were spoken in vain: for after many plagues sustained by the mischievous father, the wicked and miserable son, in the third month of his reign, was led prisoner to Babylon.

But now, when the time of their desolation approacheth, God stirreth above them such a king, such prophets and priests, as their own hearts wished; even such as should without repugnance lead them to their vomit again, that they who never delighted in the truth, might fill their bellies with horrible lies. Zedekiah was king; and such as had long resisted poor Jeremiah, had now got in their hand the fearful whip of correction. Pashur and his companions led the king as they listed. Up goeth Tophet, (a place of idolatry;) the hill-altars smoke with incense; Baal and his belly-gods, before the vengeance of God was poured upon them, and upon them whom they

deceived, get the day they long looked for. In conclusion, so horrible were the abominations that were newly erected, that the Lord crieth to his sore troubled flock, "What hath my well-beloved to do in my house; (meaning, in the temple of Jerusalem,) seeing the multitude committeth such abomination? They have provoked my anger, burning incense unto Baal. (Jer., xi.) Which great abominations, when God had showed not only to Jeremiah (who then was in Jerusalem,) but also, to Ezekiel, being prisoner in Babylon, (Ezek., viii,) their bodies being separated, in prophecy they both agreed, that the whole of Israel and Judah should be destroyed. Thus writeth Ezekiel, "Ah, upon all the abominations of Israel! they shall fall by the sword, by pestilence, and hunger. He that is far off shall die of the plague; he that is nigh, shall fall by the sword; he that is left and is besieged, shall die by hunger, and I shall complete my wrath upon them." And Jeremiah saith, "Behold, I will give this city into the hands of the Chaldees, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, who shall take it. The Chaldees verily shall enter into it, and they shall burn it with fire, and the houses in which they burnt incense to Baal. The children of Israel and the children of Judah have done nothing from their youth but wickedness, and that before mine eyes, to provoke me to anger: they have turned unto me their backs, and not their faces; they, their kings, their princes, their prophets, their priests, whole Judah, and all the city of Jerusalem; they would not hear nor be reformed. They have set up their dung (so termeth he their abominable idols,) in the place that is consecrated to my name." (Jerem., xxxii.) And when the king of Babylon was lying about the city,

he saith to the messengers of Zedekiah, who were sent to demand of the prophet, what should become of the city, "The Chaldees shall take this city, and shall burn it with fire; yea, if you had killed all the host of the Chaldees that besiegeth you, and if the killed men were left, every man should rise in his tent and should burn this city with fire. He that abideth in this city shall die, either by sword, by hunger, or by pestilence; but he that shall go forth to the Chaldees shall live, and shall win his soul for a prey." (Jerem., xxxvii.) And to the king in secret, asking his counsel, he boldly saith, "If suddenly thou shalt go forth to the princes of the Babylonians, thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burnt with fire; but and if thou go not forth to the captains of the Babylonians, this city shall be given over into the hands of the Chaldees, who shall burn it with fire, neither yet shalt thou escape their hands." (Jerem., xxxviii.)

Thus did these two prophets, (as also did others before them,) plainly speak the desolation of that place, for such offences as before have been rehearsed. But how pleaseth such message the city of Jerusalem?—the priests, princes, and people of Judah? And what reward did Jeremiah receive, for his long travail and painful preaching? Verily, even such as Pashur and his council judged meet. He spake against the temple—he prophesied mischief against the city—he made the hearts of the soldiers and the people to faint; but, principally, he was unfriendly to the faith that Pashur taught the people, to wit, the faith of their forefathers, who always rebelled against God. (Jerem., ix, xxiii, Ezek., xx.) And therefore he was reputed a heretic, accused of sedition, and condemned for treason. Plain preachings were made against all

that he had spoken, and such felicity was promised, that within two years should the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar be broken from the necks of the people, and the vessels of the Lord's house, together with all pleasures, should be brought again to Jerusalem. Now did they abound with wine and oil. Oh, pleasing and blessed among the people were such prophets! Jeremiah had troubled them, and therefore he must die: to prison shall he go, for the king can deny nothing to his princes, of whom Pashur appeareth to have been chief chancellor, by whom was not only the king, but also the whole multitude so blinded, that they durst boldly cry, "No mischance shall come to us: we shall neither see pestilence nor hunger: the king of Babylon shall never come against this land." (Jerem., xxxvii, xxxviii.) In the midst of these stormy troubles, no other comfort had the prophet, than to complain to his God, at whose commandment he had spoken. And in this his complaint, he is so kindled against their idolatry and great unthankfulness, that he crieth as in a rage, "O thou Lord of Hosts, the trier of the just, thou that seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance taken upon them, for unto thee have I referred my cause." (Jerem., xx.) As this prayer was most fearful to his enemies, if they had seen the efficacy thereof, so by the same was the prophet assured, that God's wrath was kindled against that sinful nation, and that it should not turn back, till He had performed the purposes of his own heart.

I appeal to the conscience of every indifferent man, in what one point differ the government, manners, and state of England this day, from the above rehearsed state of Judah in those days—except, that they had a king,



a man, as appeareth, of nature more facile than cruel; who sometimes was entreated in the prophet's favour, and also required of him counsel in some dangers;—and you have a queen,<sup>1</sup> a woman of a stout stomach, more stiff in opinion than flexible to the truth, who nowise may abide the presence of God's prophets. In this one thing you disagree; in all other things you are as like, as one nut is to another. Their king was led by pestilent priests: who guideth your queen, it is not unknown: under such came idolatry to the height again. Oh! would to God that the worse were not among you. In Jerusalem, was Jeremiah persecuted for speaking the truth, and for rebuking their idolatry: what prison within London tormenteth not some true prophet of God for the same causes? And O thou dungeon of darkness, where that idol of late days was first erected,<sup>2</sup>—thou Tower of London,—in thee do more Jeremiahs than one suffer injury and trouble, whom God shall comfort according to his promise, and reward their persecutors even as they have deserved! And in that day shalt thou tremble, and such as shall purpose to defend thee shall perish with thee, because thou was first defiled with the most abominable idol!

Consider, dear brethren, if all things as pertaining to iniquity be alike betwixt England, and Judah before the destruction thereof. Yea, if England be worse than Judah was in those days, seeing God spared not them, shall we think that the Lord's vengeance shall sleep, man's iniquity being so ripe? No, dear brethren; he

<sup>1</sup> Mary.

<sup>2</sup> Mary, only six days after her royal entrance into London, caused Mass to be performed in the Tower, after which it was introduced into the churches of the metropolis.

that hath understanding must know the contrary; and he to whom the Lord's mouth has spoken, must show the causes why the land shall be waste. (Jerem., ix.) It may offend you, that I call England worse than was unthankful Judah; but if good and evident reasons adduced may take place, then I fear not judgment. From Jerusalem, many passed away at the admonition of the prophet, leaving all they had, rather than they would abide the dangers of God's plagues that were threatened. God's prophets have cried, but I hear not of many that prepare to flit: God grant they repent not! In Jerusalem were princes and nobles who defended Jeremiah, and also that did absolve him, when wrongfully he was accused by the priests: but how many now of the nobility within England, boldly speak in defence of God's messengers, is easy to be told. Among them had God's prophet liberty to speak in maintenance of his doctrine: how such as seek a trial of their doctrine have been, and are intreated among you, is heard of in strange countries. In Jerusalem was Ebedmelech, who, when the prophet was cast into prison, as worthy of death, boldly past to the king, and defending the innocency of the innocent, obtained his liberty. But in England, I hear of none (God stir up some!) that dare be so bold as to put their hands betwixt the lions and their prey; the poor saints, and those cruel murderers. In Jerusalem, Jeremiah being condemned to prison, was fed at the king's charges, and that, when great hunger and scarcity of bread was in the whole city. In London, where all plenty aboundeth, are God's messengers permitted to hunger, yea, too horribly to be heard; and ancient fathers are so cruelly intreated, that like

extremity hath seldom been used upon thieves and murderers.

In this behalf I do not blame you, beloved brethren; for I assuredly know your hearts to mourn for these troubles of your brethren and faithful preachers, and that you seek all means possible how they may be comforted or relieved. But these things I rehearse, to the end that you may see that more abomination, and less fear of God, more unjust dealing, and less shame, more cruel persecutions against God's messengers, and less mercy and gentleness, is now among your chief rulers in England, than in those days was in Judah. And yet did not Jerusalem escape the punishment of God. Shall we then believe, that England may avoid the vengeance that is threatened? No, dear brethren. If idolatry continues as it is begun, no more can England escape God's vengeance, than God himself may lose his justice. And therefore, dearly beloved in our Saviour Jesus Christ, if profit to yourselves or your posterity can move you anything, then must ye avoid and flee idolatry; for if the Lord's messengers that shall be sent to execute his wrath, find you among filthy idolaters, your bodies committing like abominations with them, ye have no warrant that ye shall escape the plagues prepared for the wicked; but rather, it is to be feared, that ye shall be plagued with them. The whole tribe of Benjamin perished with the adulterers, and yet were they not all adulterers in fact. (Judg., xx.) All Amalek was commanded to be destroyed, and yet was not one of those living that troubled the Israelites in their passage from Egypt. (1 Sam., xv.) Pharaoh was not drowned alone, as in another letter I have plainly written; neither yet found Jonathan mercy as touching life corporal, in the day

when God's vengeance punished Saul the reprobate. And why? The apostle answereth, "Because men knowing the justice of God, (saith he,) and doing the contrary, are worthy of death:"—not only those that do wickedly, but also such as consent to the same. And no man can be excused, but that he consenteth, who daily frequenting the company of wicked men, giveth sign neither in word nor in work, that iniquity displeaseth him. (Rom., i.) And therefore yet I say, if profit may move us, most profitable shall it be, even for the body, in this present life, to avoid idolatry; for so doing, as we shall escape the plagues which the ungodly shall suffer, so is God by his promise obligate and bound unto us, to be our father, our portion, our inheritance and defence. He promiseth (and will not deceive) to carry us upon his own wings from all danger, to plant us and our posterity in everlasting memorial, to feed us in the time of hunger, and finally, to fight for us, and to save us from all miseries and mischances. (Isa., xlix, lxiii, Zech., xx, Psal., lii, lvii, cxl, cxlvi.)

But now to the subsequent.—As it is most profitable for body and soul to avoid idolatry, so is it so necessary, that unless we so do, we refuse to be in league with God; we declare ourselves to have no faith, and we deny to be God's witnesses. And so must He of his justice expressed in his word, deny us to appertain to him or to his kingdom. And then, alas! what resteth for us but perpetual death, ordained for those that will not continue in league with God? The league betwixt God and us containeth these conditions—that God shall be our God, and we shall be his people; he shall communicate with us of his grace and goodness, we shall serve him in body and soul.

He shall be our safe-guard from death and damnation; we shall stick to him and flee from all strange gods. This is the league, in making whereof we swore solemnly, never to have fellowship with any religion, except that which God hath authorised by his manifest word.

If by God's Scriptures these precedents be so plain, that reasonably no man can deny any point thereof, then have I good hope, that ye will admit it to be necessary that you avoid idolatry, if the league betwixt God and you shall be kept sure. And, first, it is to be observed, that God's justice being infinite in matters of religion, requireth like obedience of all those that be within this league at all times, that he requireth of every one nation or particular man in any one age. For all that be within this league are one body, as Moses doth witness, reckoning men, women, children, servants, princes, priests, officers, and strangers, within the covenant of the Lord. (Deut., xxix.) Then, what God requireth of one, (as touching this league,) he requireth of all, for his justice is immutable; and what he condemneth in any one, that he must condemn in others, for he is righteous without partiality. Then, let us consider what God hath required of such as have been in league with him, and what he pronounceth damnable. Moses, the mouth of God to his people of Israel, speaketh as follows, "If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or the wife of thine own bosom, or thy neighbour whom thou lovest as thine own life, shall privily solicit thee, saying, Let us go and serve other gods whom thou hast not known, etc., obey him not, hear him not, neither yet let thine eye spare him: be not merciful unto him, nor hide him, but kill him. Let thy hand be the

first upon him, that such a one may be killed, and then the hand of the whole people. Stone him with stones till he die." And so likewise commandeth he to be done with a whole city, if the indwellers thereof turn back to idolatry; adding also, that the city and the whole spoil thereof shall be burnt; that no portion shall be saved, nor yet, that the city shall be builded for ever again, because it is accursed of God. Here is a plain declaration, what God requireth of them that will continue in league with him, and what he hath condemned by his express word. And do we esteem, beloved brethren, that the immutable God will wink at our idolatry, as that He saw it not, seeing he commandeth judgments to be executed so severely against idolaters, and against such as only provoked or solicited others to idolatry; that neither should blood nor affinity, neither multitude nor riches, save such as offend, neither yet, that we should conceal their offences; but that we should be the first that should accuse brother, son, daughter, or wife? And why? Because he intendeth (saith Moses) to bring thee from the Lord thy God, who led thee forth from the land of Egypt; and therefore let him die, that all Israel hearing, may fear, and presume not after to commit the like abominations. Let nothing pertaining to such a man or city cleave unto thy hand, that the Lord may turn from the fury of his wrath, and be moved over thee with most tender mercy and affection; and that he may multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers."

In these words most evidently is expressed unto us, why God wills that we avoid all fellowship with idolatry, and with the maintainers of the same: in which are there things chiefly to be noted; Firstly,

that the Holy Ghost instructeth us, that maintainers of idolatry and provokers to the same, intend to draw us from God; and therefore, He commandeth us that we shall not conceal their impiety, but that we shall make it known, and that we shall punish it, if we will have the league betwixt us and God to stand sure. And here is the chief ground of my first cause, why it is necessary to avoid idolatry, because that otherwise we declare ourselves little to regard, yea, to have broken, and plainly denied that holy league which is betwixt us and God, through Jesus Christ. Secondly, it is to be noted, that idolatry so kindleth the wrath of God, that it is never quenched, till the offenders, and all that they possess, be destroyed from the earth, and that by fire. It may appear that this is a severe and rigorous judgment. But let the cause be considered, and then we shall understand, that in the same, God showeth unto us his most singular love, declaring himself enemy to our enemies. For all those that would draw us from God, (be they kings or queens,) being of the devil's nature, are enemies unto God; and therefore God wills, that in such cases, we declare ourselves enemies unto them. And, Last, it is to be noted, that obedience given unto God, in taking vengeance upon idolaters by such means as God hath appointed, is a cause wherefore God showeth his mercy, why he multiplieth us, and embraceth us with fatherly love; whereas contrariwise, by consenting with idolatry, the mercies of God are shut up from us, and we are cut off from the body of Christ, to wither and rot, as trees without moisture.

But now shall some demand, what then? shall we go to, and kill all idolaters? That were the office and duty of every civil magistrate within his realm and

jurisdiction: but of you is required only to avoid participation and company of that abomination, as well in body as in soul, as David and Paul plainly teach. David, in his exile in the midst of idolaters, saith, "I will not offer their drink-offerings of blood, neither yet will I take their name in my mouth." (Psalm xvi.) And Paul saith, "You may not be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils: you may not drink the Lord's cup, and the cup of devils." (Cor., x.) As these two places of Scripture plainly resolve the former question, so do they confirm that which is before said, that the league betwixt us and God requireth avoiding of all idolatry. First, plain it is, that in Gath and in Corinth, was no small number of idolaters, when David was there in exile, and when Paul wrote his epistle; yet neither saith David, that he will kill any in that place, (because he was not their magistrate,) neither giveth Paul any such commandment. But in one thing they both agree, that such as have society and league with God, must so abhor idolatry, that no part of the body be defiled therewith. For David saith, "I will not take their names in my mouth"—as he would say, So odious are the names of false and vain gods, that the mention of them is rightfully compared to stinking dung and vile carrion, which neither can be eaten, neither yet smelled, without displeasure of such as have not lost the judgment of their senses. And therefore saith David, "I will not defile my mouth with them;" that is, I will never speak one favourable word of them. I think, much less would he have crouched and kneeled before them, for any man's pleasure.

Advert, brethren, that David inspired with the



Holy Ghost, knew no such shifts as worldly-wise men imagine now-a-days, that they may keep their hearts pure and clean to God, though their bodies dance with the devil. Not so, dear brethren, not so. The temple of God hath nothing to do with idols. David expresseth the cause in these words, "For the Lord himself is my portion and my inheritance." Great is the cause, if it be deeply considered. David, illuminated by the Holy Ghost, saith even the self-same thing, which before we have alleged of the apostle's words, that God will not divide spoil with the devil, permitting him to have the service of the body, and He to stand content with the soul, heart, or mind. No, brethren; David maketh this the foundation and reason, why he will neither offer sacrifice to idols, neither yet defile his mouth with their names, "because," saith he, "the Lord is my portion;" as he would say, Such is the condition of the league between me and my God, that as he is my tower of defence against mine enemies, preserving and nourishing both the body and soul, so must I be wholly His in body and soul; for my God is of that nature, that he will suffer no portion of his glory to be given to another. In confirmation of this, Isaiah saith, after he had rebuked their idols and vain inventions, "These are thy portion." (Isa., lvii.) And Jeremiah likewise, in mocking of them, saith, "Let thy bed-fellows deliver thee: call upon them, and let them hear thee: thou hast committed fornication and whoredom with stock and with stone." (Jerem., iii.) the prophets meaning thereby, that idolaters can have no league nor covenant with God, in so far as their hearts be alienated from him, which the service of their bodies doth testify. And, therefore, God re-

nounceth such league and bond as was before offered; for Isaiah would say, Even such as thou hast chosen, such shall be thy portion: and Jeremiah would say, Thou hast put thy trust in them (which he meaneth, by the lying with them in bed,) and therefore let them show their power in thy deliverance. And thus he sendeth them, as it were, to suck water from hot burning coals.

It shall nothing excuse us to say, "We trust not in idols;" for so will every idolater allege. But if either you or they in God's honour do any thing contrary to God's word, you show yourself to put your trust in somewhat else besides God, and so are you idolaters. Mark, brethren, that many make an idol of their own wisdom or fantasy, trusting more to that which they think good, than upon God, who plainly saith, "Not that thing which seemeth good in thine eyes, do unto thy God, but what the Lord thy God hath commanded thee." But of this, some other time, God willing, more shall be spoken. Hereof I suppose it is plain, that like as God is immutable, who by his law, hath not only forbidden all fellowship with idolaters in their idolatry, but also, hath commanded that vengeance and punishment be taken upon them; and as the saints of God were inspired with the Holy Ghost, who would not so much as once favourably speak of idols; and, lastly, as the Scriptures be infallible, which pronounce, that God may not abide that our bodies serve the devil, in uniting our bodies with idolatry, so is it of mere necessity, that both in body and soul we abstain from the same, if we will have the league betwixt God and us to stand sure.

I will not trouble you at this time, with answering

any such objections, as men seeking to live as they list, do now-a-days invent, seeing that partly in another letter I have answered the same; and if God shall grant me any rest in this wicked life, I purpose by the grace of God, as occasion shall be offered, fully to answer what can be said for their defence—which in very deed when all is said that they can, they have said nothing that God will admit.

It now resteth to show, that in haunting idolatry, we declare ourselves to be without faith, and do deny to bear witness to God. That faith purgeth the heart, I trust none of you will deny. But whether that inward faith requireth an external confession, and if a man may not have faith, and yet do in ceremonies of the church as the world doth, here perchance ye doubt. As to the first, the apostle answereth in these words, "In the heart it is believed unto justice, but by the mouth is confession to salvation." (Rom., x.) And David saith, "I have believed, and therefore have I spoken, but I was sore troubled." (Psalm cxvi.) As David would say, I would not conceal the confession of my faith, howbeit trouble did ensue the same. Thus the Holy Ghost joineth faith and confession, as things that be inseparable the one from the other; and therefore dare I not take upon me to dissever them, but must say, that where true faith is, there is also confession of the same, when time and necessity requireth; and that where confession is not found, there Faith is asleep, if she be not from home.

Now is it to be considered, if this time requireth the confession of our faith. Christ and his gospel are opposed; his holy sacraments are profaned; Christ's messengers are some of them exiled, some cruelly tormented in prison; our adversaries have gotten the

upper hand, and an execrable idol is set up, in confirmation of all iniquity:—what now shall I do, that am assured that all this is abomination? Here, Christ is in battle. Shall I do as the multitude, or as Christ's enemies do? What confession give I then? Assuredly, even such as the rest do; for neither doth foot, hand, eye, nor mouth, witness the contrary. The feet carry the body to serve an idol; the eye beholdeth it with a certain reverence; the mouth dares not whisper what the heart thinketh, yea, the hands are extended, and give signification of humble obedience:—have I not now justified the devil, and condemned Christ?—it cannot be denied! But let me have no credit, unless the same be yet proved by most plain demonstrations of God's sacred Scriptures. The Lord, by his prophet Isaiah, saith to his people of Israel, (and this is answer also to the second question, If I may not do as the world doth, and yet have faith?) “You are my witnesses, whether there be any God but I alone: is there any Creator that I should not know him?” (Isa., xliv.) These words were spoken, as it were, making an entrance to rebuke all idolatry, and the vain inventors of the same. As the Lord would say, Thou house of Jacob, and you natural children descending from Abraham, you are my people whom peculiarly I have chosen, to show in you the greatness of my name. For that end have I spoken unto you hid things from the beginning, that you may understand and know, that there is no knowledge but in me alone; that you, persuaded of my infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, may testify and bear witness of the same, to such as have not the like understanding with you. Hereof it is plain, that of such as to whom God giveth

knowledge, he requireth a confession, to provoke the ignorant to embrace God and his word, or at the least, that by the understanding man, the vanity of the foolish should be rebuked. So jealous is God over his gifts, that if we labour not to employ them to the glory of God, and to profit others his creatures, he will according to the threatening of Christ, take the talent from us, and will give it to such as will labour thereupon.

Some perchance would gladly labour, but they see not what fruit shall succeed; and therefore judge they it better to cease; as though God would bring forth no fruit, except he made us first of his counsel. God is to be obeyed in his commandments, and the success is to be committed unto him whose wisdom is unsearchable. He commandeth us to refrain from idolatry, to let other men see that they do wrong. This ought we to obey, albeit, instant death should follow; for we are called as witnesses between God and the blind world, as is before said, "Israel, thou art my witness." The world asketh, Is the mass God's service, or is it idolatry? God hath shown to us that it is abominable idolatry; but when we for fear of our vile carcasses, do as the blind world doth, what witness bear we? assuredly false witness against God, and against our neighbour. Against God, for that we justify and maintain that with our presence, which God condemneth: against our neighbour, for that we confirm him in error, to both our condemnations. But when we abstain from all fellowship of idolatry, whatever ensue thereupon, we perform our duty to God's glory.

Let no man think that I am more severe than necessity requireth. No, brethren; I always contain

my affirmations within the bounds of God's Scriptures. And that shall Jeremiah the prophet witness, who writing to the Jews being prisoners in Babylon, after he had forbidden them to follow the vain religion of that people with whom they were then conversant, by many reasons proving, that their idols were no gods, at last he saith, "You shall say to them, The gods that made neither heaven nor earth, shall perish from the earth, and from under the heaven." (Jerem., x.) Here is to be observed, as John Calvin, that singular instrument of God, most diligently noteth, that the rest of the prophet's work was written in the Hebrew tongue, which then was peculiar to the Jews; but these verses and words above-rehearsed were written in the Chaldee tongue, in the tongue of that people where the Jews were then in thralldom; as that the prophet would constrain them to change their natural tongue, and in plain words declare the hatred and alienation which they had from all worshipping of idols. I beseech you, brethren, mark the words of the prophet. He saith not, you may think in your hearts, that they are vain, and that they shall perish. But you shall say, and that not privily, but to them who put their trust in such vanity, as the three children openly spoke, denying to give the reverence of their bodies before an idol; and Daniel, that would not keep secret the confession of his faith, only three days. Hereof it is plain, that requiring that ye profane not your bodies with idolatry, I require no more, than God's Scriptures by plain precepts and examples teach. Neither yet require I of every man, and at all times, so much; for I constrain no man to go to idolaters in the time of their idolatry, and to say, that all which they do, is abominable and nought;

but only that we keep our own bodies, (called by the apostle, the temples of the Holy Ghost,) clean from all such diabolical conventions; which that we do, is most profitable, and also necessary to the preservation of ourselves and of our posterity: of whom now, at the end, we must somewhat speak.

Every man who is not degenerated to the nature of a brute beast, will appear to bear such love to his children, that to leave them riches, in rest, and in good estate, he patiently will suffer troubles, and without grudge will do many things that otherwise are contrary to his own pleasure. And with my heart I wish to God, that the perfection of this were deeply grounded in man's heart; I mean, very love, and not fond foolishness, which under the name of love, procureth destruction of body, where contrariwise, true love most carefully laboureth for the salvation of both (1 Cor., xiii). If this love, I say, towards our children, which every man pretendeth to have, be in us, then of necessity it is, that for these causes, we shall avoid all society of these filthy abominations. This my assertion may appear strange; but if it be with impartiality considered, it shall be very easy to be understood. The only way to leave our children blessed and happy, is to leave them righteously instructed in God's true religion: for what availeth all that is on earth, if condemnation follow death, yea, and God's vengeance go before the same, as of necessity they must, where the true knowledge of God is absent? Plain it is, that the true knowledge of God is not born with man, neither yet cometh it unto him by natural power; but he must have school-masters, to train him up in that which he lacketh. The chief school-master (the Holy Ghost excepted,) of the age

following, is the works, practices, and lives of the forefathers, to which commonly we see the children so addicted and bound, (and especially if to be in idolatry,) that God crying by the mouths of his messengers, hath much to do to rend or pluck any man back from his forefathers' footsteps. Now, if that you altogether refusing God, stoop under idolatry, what school-masters are you to your posterity? what image show you to your children? yea, in what estate leave you them, both touching body and soul? Assuredly you are even such school-masters, as were those fathers who consenting to Jeroboam's idolatry, left unto their children a pattern of perdition. To speak it plainly, you leave them blinded in idolatry, and bond-slaves to the devil, without hope of redemption, or light to be received. "Tush!" will some say, "the Lord knoweth his own." True it is; but his ordinary means to come by his knowledge, are not to be contemned. He commandeth you to teach your children his laws, statutes, and ceremonies, that they likewise may teach the same to the generation following.

But yet will some object, What did our fathers teach unto us? O, dear brethren, be not so ingrate and unthankful unto God; neither yet would I that you should flatter yourselves, thinking that such a trumpet shall be blown to your posterity, as hath been blown unto you! If all come to so close a silence as the Lord's messengers found at the beginning of this our age, when this whole realm of England was drowned in so deadly a sleep, that the sound of the Lord's trumpet was not understood, till first the most part of the blowers gave their blood, in testimony that their doctrine was the same which began with blood, was planted and kept in mind by the same, and by



blood increased and did fructify, will the Lord have his messengers to fight alone? Will he bestow such abundance of blood upon your children, to encourage them, as he did upon you, for your instruction and encouragement? If that you also traitorously fly from him in the day of this his battle, the contrary is greatly to be feared.

Oft revolving how God hath used my tongue (my tongue, I say, being the most wretched of all others,) plainly to speak the troubles that are present, there occurreth to my mind a certain admonition that God willed I commonly should use in all congregations. The admonition was this, That the last trumpet was in blowing within the realm of England, and therefore ought every man to prepare him for battle; for if the trumpet should cease and be put to silence, then should it never blow again with like force in England, till the coming of the Lord Jesus. O, dear brethren, how sore these threatenings pierce my heart this day, God only knoweth; and in what anguish of heart I write the same, God shall declare, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed! I wish myself to be accursed of God, as touching all earthly pleasures or comfort, for one year of that time which, alas! neither you nor I did righteously esteem, when all abounded with us. I sob and groan, I call and I pray, that in that point I may be deceived. But I am commanded to stand content, for it is God himself that fulfilleth the words of his true messengers: his justice and order cannot be perverted. The sun keepeth his ordinary course, and leapeth not back from the west to the south; but when it goeth down, we lack the light of it, till it rise the next day towards the east again. And so it is with the light

of the Gospel, which hath his day appointed by God, as witnesseth Christ, saying, "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that darkness apprehend you not." (John, xii.) And Paul, "The night is past, and the day is come," (meaning of the Gospel) (Rom., xiii.)—and also, "This day if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts." (Heb., iii.) And albeit that this day, be all time from Christ's incarnation till his last coming again, yet evident it is, that all nations have not had at one time the light of God's word; but some were in darkness, when others had light. But by the contrary, most evident it is, that where the light of the Gospel for man's unthankfulness hath been taken away, there is it not to this day restored again. Witness whole Israel, and all the congregations of the Gentiles, where Christ was first preached by the apostles. What is in Asia? ignorance of God. What in Africa? abnegation of Christ. What in those most notable churches of the Greeks, where Christ was planted by Paul, and long after watered by others? Mahomet and his false sect. Yea, what is in Rome?—the greatest idol of all others, that adversary to Christ, that Man of Sin, extolled above all that is called God. Hath God punished these nations before us, not only the first offenders, but even their posterity unto this day, and shall he spare us, if we be like unthankful as they were; yea, if we be worse than they were? For of them, no small number suffered persecution, banishment, slander, poverty, and finally, death, for the professing of Christ, who having only this knowledge, that idols were odious before God, could neither for loss of temporal goods, for honours offered if they would obey, nor yet for most cruel torments suffered in resisting,

once be persuaded to bow before idols. And, alas! shall we, after so many graces that God hath offered unto us, for pleasure, or for vain threatening of those whom your hearts know, and your mouths have confessed, to be odious idolaters, run back to idolatry, to the perdition of ourselves and of our posterity to come? Shall God's holy prophets work no greater obedience in you? Shall nature no otherwise mollify your hearts? Shall not fatherly pity overcome that cruelty? Oh, behold your children, and consider the end of their creation! Great cruelty it were to save yourselves, and to damn them; but oh! more than cruelty, and madness that cannot be expressed, if for the pleasure of a moment, you deprive yourselves and your posterity of that eternal joy, that is ordained for those that continue in confession of Christ's name and truth to the end; which assuredly you do, if without resistance altogether, ye return to idolatry again. Alas! then the trumpet hath lost its sound; the sun is gone down, and the light vanished away. But if that God shall strengthen you, boldly to withstand all such impiety, then is there but a dark misty cloud overspreading the sun for a moment, which shortly shall vanish, so that the beams of the sun shall afterward be seven-fold more bright and amiable than they were before; your patience and constancy shall be the louder trumpet to your posterity, than were all the voices of the prophets that cried to you. And therefore, for the tender mercies of God, arm yourselves to stand with Christ: fly from that abominable idol, the maintainers of which shall not escape the vengeance of God. Let it be known to your posterity, that ye were Christians, and not idolaters; and

so is not the trumpet ceased, so long as any boldly resist idolatry.

The precepts are sharp and hard to be observed, will some object; and yet again I affirm, that compared with the plagues which assuredly shall fall upon the contemners, they shall be found easy and light. For avoiding of idolatry, it may chance that ye be contemned in the world, and compelled to leave the realm. But obeyers of idolatry, as before God they are abominable, so shall they be compelled body and soul to burn in hell. For avoiding of idolatry, your worldly substance shall be lost and spoiled; but for obeying of idolatry, heavenly riches shall be lost. By avoiding idolatry, you may fall into the hands of earthly tyrants; but obeyers, consenters, and maintainers of idolatry, shall not escape the hands of the living God. For avoiding idolatry, your children shall be deprived of father, friends, riches, and earthly rest; but by obedience to idolatry, they shall be left without God, without the knowledge of his word, and without hope of his kingdom. Consider, dear brethren, that how much more dolorous it is to be tormented in hell, than to suffer trouble on earth; to be deprived of heavenly joy, than to be robbed of transitory riches; to fall into the hands of the living God, than to abide man's vain and uncertain displeasure—so much more fearful and dangerous it is, to obey idolatry, or dissembling, to consent to that abomination, than avoiding the same, to suffer what inconveniences may follow thereupon by man's tyranny. Oh, be not like Esau, that sold and lost his birth-right for a mess of pottage!

I am not so prejudging God's mercies, as that such as after shall repent, shall not find grace. God for-

bid ! for herein am I most assuredly persuaded, that in whatsoever hour a sinner shall repent, God shall not remember one of his iniquities, (Ezek., xviii, xxxiii) ; but albeit his offences were as red as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow ; and albeit in multitude they passed number, yet so shall they be blotted out, that none of them shall appear to damnation of the truly repentant. (Isa., i.) For His promises are infallible, that such as truly believe in Christ, shall never enter into judgment, for the blood of Jesus Christ purgeth them from all sin, (John, iii, v ; 1 John, i) ; so that how far the heaven is distant from the earth, so far doth He remove the sins from the penitent. (Psal. ciii.) But consider, dearly beloved brethren, that these and the like promises are made to penitent sinners, and do nothing pertain to profane persons, idolaters, nor timid shrinkers from the truth from fear of worldly troubles. And if any allege that God may call men to repentance, how wicked soever they be, I answer, that I acknowledge and do confess God's omnipotence to be so free, that he may do what pleaseth his wisdom. But yet is He not bound to do all that our fantasy requireth. And likewise I know, that God is so loving and so kind to such as fear him, that he will perform their wills and pleasures, although kings and princes had sworn the contrary. But herein standeth the doubt ; whether that such as for pleasure of men, or for avoiding temporal punishment, defile themselves with idolatry, fear God—and whether they who all their life deny Christ, by consenting to idolatry, shall at the last hour be called to repentance. No such promise have we within the Scriptures of God, but rather the express contrary—and therefore, God is not to be tempted, but is to be

heard, feared, and obeyed, when thus earnestly he calleth, and threateneth not without cause, "Pass from the midst of her, O my people, saith the Lord, that you be not partakers of her plagues." (Rev., xviii.) And that is meant of that abominable whore, and of her abomination, "How long will you halt on both parts?" (1 Kings, xviii.) You may not both be partakers of the cup of the Lord and the cup of the devil." (1 Cor., x.) "He that denieth me before men, I will deny him before my Father. He that refuseth not himself, and taketh up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me." (Matt., x.) "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking backward, is worthy of the kingdom of God." (Luke, ix.) And Paul to the Hebrews only means of this sin, where he saith, "who willingly sins after the knowledge of the truth, cannot be renewed again by repentance. (Heb., vi, x.) O, dear brethren, remember the dignity of our vocation. You have followed Christ, you have proclaimed war against idolatry, you have laid hand upon the truth, and have communicated with the Lord's table. Will you now suddenly slide back? will you refuse Christ and his truth, and make paction with the devil, and with his deceivable doctrine? will you tread the precious blood of his testament under your feet, and set up an idol before the people?—which things assuredly you do as oft as ever you present your bodies among idolaters, before that blasphemous idol. God, the father of all mercies, for Christ his Son's sake preserve you from that sore temptation, whose dolours and dangers very sorrow will not suffer me to express. Alas! brethren, it is to be feared, that if you once fall asleep, you lie too long before you be wakened!

Yet some shall object, Peter the denier obtained mercy. To whom I answer, particular examples make no common law; neither yet is there any resemblance or likelihood betwixt the fall of Peter, and our daily idolatry. Peter, upon a sudden, without any previous purpose, thrice denied Christ within the space of an hour or two; we, upon determined purpose and advised mind, daily deny Christ. Peter had Christ's assurance and promise that, after his denial, he should be converted; we have Christ's threatenings that if we deny, we shall be denied. Peter in the bishop's hall, and among wicked men of war, committed his offence for fear of his life; we, in our own city and household, only for loss of wicked mammon, do no less. Peter, at the warning of the cock, and at Christ's look, left the company that provoked his sin; we, after Christ's admonitions, yea, after gentle exhortations and fearful threatenings, will continue in the midst of idolaters, and for their pleasures will crouch and kneel as the devil commandeth. What likelihood is here, let every man judge. But much I wonder that men that can espy such narrow shifts, as to hide themselves from the presence of God behind a bush with Adam their father, cannot also espy, that Judas was an apostle in presence of men, of no less authority than Peter was; that Cain was the first-born in the world; that Saul was the first anointed king by God's commandment, and by his prophet (1 Sam., x); and that Ahithophel was a man of most singular wisdom. (2 Sam., xvi.) And yet none of these found place of repentance. Have we any other assurances and particular warrants within the Scriptures of God than they had, that all our life we may be in league with the devil, and then, at our pleasure, that we may

lay hand upon Christ, and clothe us with his righteousness?

Be not deceived, dear brethren, for although most true it is, that whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, (Joel, ii; Rom., x); yet like true it is, that whoever calleth upon the name of the Lord, shall avoid and eschew all iniquity, and that whosoever continueth in open iniquity, the same man incalleth not the name of the Lord, (2 Tim., ii); neither hath God any respect to his prayer. (John, ix, Job, xxxv.) And greater iniquity was never from the beginning, than is contained in that abominable idol; for it is the seal of that league which the devil hath made with the pestilent sons of Antichrist, and is the very chief cause why the blood of the saints of God hath been shed nigh the space of a thousand years; for so long almost hath it been in devising and in decking with that whorish garment wherein it now triumphs against Christ, and against the only one sacrifice of his death, and merits of his passion. Which whole abomination you confirm, and show yourselves consenting to the murder of those that have suffered for speaking against it, as oft as ever you garnish that idol with your presence. And therefore avoid it, as that ye will be partakers with Christ, with whom ye have sworn to die and to live, in Baptism and in his Holy Supper. Shame it were to break promise unto man; but is it not more shame to break it unto God? Foolishness it were to leave that king whose victory you saw present, and to take part with him whom you understood and perceived to be so vanquished and overthrown, that he neither might resist, neither yet abide the coming of his adversary. O, brethren! is not the devil, the prince of this world,



vanquished and cast out? (John, xii, xvi.) Hath not Christ made conquest of him? Hath he not carried our flesh up to glory, in despite of Satan's malice? Shall not our champion return? You understand that he shall, and that with expedition, when Satan and his adherents, idolaters, worshippers of that blasphemous beast, filthy persons, and timorous shrinkers from the truth of God, shall be cast into the lake burning with fire and brimstone which never shall be quenched. (Rev., xx, xxii.)

But in the meantime, you fear corporal death? If nature admitted any man to live for ever, then had your fear some appearance of reason. But if corporal death be common to all, why will ye jeopard to lose the life everlasting, to decline and escape that which neither rich nor poor, neither wise nor foolish, proud of stomach nor feeble of courage, and, finally, no earthly creature, by no craft nor ingenuity of man did ever escape? If any have escaped the horrible fear of death, it was such as boldly did oppose men's iniquity in the earth. But yet grudgeth the flesh, say you, for fear of the torment? Let it do its own nature and office, for so must it do till it be burdened with Christ's cross, and then, no doubt, shall God send such comfort as now we look not for. Let us not turn back from Christ, albeit the flesh complain, and fear the torment. Wonder it is, that the way to life is fearful unto us, considering that so great a number of our brethren have passed before us in at the same gate that we so much abhor. Have not the most part of the saints of God entered into their rest by torments and troubles; of whom witnesseth Paul, "Some were racked, some hewn asunder, some slain with swords; some walked up and down in sheep's skins, in need, in

tribulation and vexation, in mountains, dens, and in caves of the earth." (Heb., xi.) And in all these extremities what complaints hear we of their mouths, except it be, that they lament the blindness of the world, and the perdition of their persecutors? Did God comfort them, and shall he despise us if, in obedience to him, we follow their footsteps? He shall not do it, for he hath promised to the contrary.

And therefore, dearly beloved in the Lord, as ye purpose to avoid the vengeance of God that suddenly shall strike all obstinate idolaters; as ye would have the league betwixt God and you to stand sure; and as ye will declare yourselves to have true faith, without which no man shall ever enter into life—and finally, as ye will leave the true knowledge of God in possession to your children, avoid idolatry, and all participation thereof; for it is so odious before God's presence, that not only doth he punish the inventors and first offenders, but often their posterity are stricken with blindness and dazedness<sup>1</sup> of mind. (Deut., xxviii.) The battle shall appear strong which you have to suffer; but the Lord himself shall be your comfort: he shall come in your defence with his mighty power; he shall give you victory when none is hoped for; he shall turn your tears into everlasting joy; he shall confound your enemies with the breath of his mouth; he shall let you see their destruction, that now are most proud. (Zech., ii, Psalm iv, vi, lxxvii, lxi, Rev., vii, xxii, Psalm lv.)

The God of all comfort and consolation, for Christ Jesus his Son's sake, grant that this my simple and plain admonition (yea, rather, the warning of the Holy Ghost,) may be received and accepted of you with no less fear and obedience, than I have written

<sup>1</sup> Stupor.

it to you with unfeigned and sorrowful heart. And then, I doubt not but we shall be comforted, when all such as now molest us, shall tremble and shake at the coming of our Lord Jesus: whose omnipotent Spirit preserve and keep you undefiled, body and soul, to the end. Amen.

*God increase our faith.*

## A FORT FOR THE AFFLICTED,

IN AN

## EXPOSITION UPON THE SIXTH PSALM OF DAVID,

WHEREIN IS DECLARED HIS CROSS, COMPLAINTS, AND PRAYERS. MOST NECESSARY TO BE READ OF ALL THEM FOR THEIR SINGULAR COMFORT THAT, UNDER THE BANNER OF CHRIST, ARE BY SATAN ASSAULTED, AND FEEL THE HEAVY BURDEN OF SIN WITH WHICH THEY ARE OPPRESSED.

The patient abiding of the sore afflicted was never yet confounded.

## PART I.

TO HIS BELOVED MOTHER, J. K., SENDETH GREETING IN THE LORD.

THE desire that I have to hear of your continuance with Christ Jesus in the day of this his battle, which shortly shall end to the confusion of his proud enemies, neither by tongue, neither yet by pen, can I express, beloved mother. Assuredly it is such, that it vanquisheth and overcometh all remembrance and solicitude which the flesh useth to take, for feeding and defence of herself. For in every realm and nation, God will stir up some one or other, to minister those things that appertain to this wretched life; and if men will cease to do their office, yet will he send his ravens. So that in every place, perchance, I may find some feathers to my body. But, alas! where I shall find children to be begotten unto God by the word of life, that can I not presently consider. And therefore, the spirityal life of such as sometimes

boldly professed Christ, God knoweth is to my heart more dear, than all the glory, riches, and honour in earth; and the falling back of such men as I hear daily to turn back to that idol again, is to me more dolorous, than I trust the corporal death shall be, whenever it shall come at God's appointment. Some will ask, then, why did I fly? Assuredly I cannot tell; but of one thing I am sure, the fear of death was not the chief cause of my flying. I trust that one cause hath been, to let me see with my corporal eyes, that all had not a true heart to Christ, that in the day of rest and peace bare a fair face. But my flying is no matter. By God's grace I may come to battle, before that all the conflict be ended. And haste the time, O Lord, at thy good pleasure, that once again my tongue may yet praise thy holy name before the congregation, if it were but in the very hour of death!

I have written a large treatise touching the plagues that assuredly shall apprehend obstinate idolaters, and those also that dissembling with them, deny Christ, in obeying to idolatry; which I would you should read diligently. If it come not to you from the South, I shall provide that it shall come to you by some other means. Touching your continual trouble, given unto you by God for better purpose than we can presently espy, I have begun unto you the exposition of the Sixth Psalm; and as God shall grant unto me opportunity, and health of body (which now is very weak,) I purpose to absolve the same.

#### THE ARGUMENT OF THE SIXTH PSALM.

It appeareth that David after his offence, fell into some great and dangerous sickness, in which he was

sore tormented, not so much by corporal infirmities, as by sustaining and drinking some large portion of the cup of God's wrath. And albeit that he was delivered as then from the corporal death, yet it appeareth, that long after, (yea, and I verily believe, that all his life,) he had some sense and remembrance of the horrible fear which before he suffered in the time of his sickness. And therefore, the Holy Ghost speaking in him, sheweth unto us what be the complaints of God's elect under such cross; how diversely they are tormented; how that they appear to have no sure hold of God, but to be abject from him; and yet what are the signs that they are God's elect. And so doth the Holy Ghost teach us to seek help of God, even when he is punishing, and appeareth to be angry with us.

*"O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, nor chasten me in thy hot displeasure."*—David, sore troubled in body and spirit, lamentably prayeth unto God; which that you may more surely understand, I will attempt to express it in more words. David speaketh unto God, as he would speak unto a man, in this manner: O Lord, I feel what is the weight and strength of thy displeasure. I have experience how intolerable is the heaviness of thy hand, which I, most wretched man, have provoked against myself by my horrible sins. Thou whippest me, and scourgest me bitterly; yea, so thou vexest me, that unless thou withdraw thy hand, and remit thy displeasure, there resteth nothing unto me but utterly to be confounded. I beseech thee, O Lord, rage not, neither be commoved against me above measure:<sup>1</sup> remit and take

<sup>1</sup> The original MS. from which the First Part of this Exposition was transcribed, commences with this sentence; but to make the

away thy heavy displeasure, which by my iniquity I have provoked against myself.

This appeareth to have been the meaning of David in his first words, whereby he declareth himself to have felt the grievous wrath of God before he burst forth in these words. In which first is to be noted, that the prophet acknowledgeth all trouble that he sustained as well in body as in spirit, to be sent of God, and not to happen unto him by chance. For herein peculiarly differ the sons of God from the reprobate, that the sons of God know both prosperity and adversity to be the gifts of God only, as Job witnesseth; and therefore in prosperity commonly they are not insolent nor proud, but even in the day of joy and rest they look for trouble and sorrow: neither yet, in the time of adversity, are they altogether left without comfort; but by one mean or other, God showeth to them that trouble shall have end. While contrariwise the reprobate, either taking all things of chance, or else making an idol of their own wisdom, in prosperity are so puffed up that they forget God, without any care that trouble should follow; and in adversity they are so dejected, that they look for nothing but hell.

Here must I put you in mind, dearly beloved, how often you and I have talked together of these present days, till neither of us could refrain tears, when no such appearance there was seen by man. How oft have I said to you, that I looked daily for trouble, and that I wondered that so long I did escape it? What moved me to refuse, and that with displeasure of all men, (even of those that best loved me,) those

whole complete, it has been judged advisable to include the preceding paragraphs from the earliest printed edition.

high promotions that were offered, by him whom God hath taken from us for our offences? <sup>1</sup> Assuredly, the foresight of trouble to come. How oft have I said unto you, that the time would not be long, that England would give me bread? Advise with the last letter I wrote unto your brother-in-law, and consider what is therein contained.

While I had this trouble, you had the greater, sent, I doubt not, to both of us of God, that in that great rest, and, as we may call it, when the Gospel triumphed, we should not be so careless and so insolent as others were, who, although they professed Christ in mouth, yet sought they nothing but the world, with hand, with foot, with counsel, and wisdom. And albeit at this present, our comfort appear not, yet before all the plagues be poured forth, it shall be known, that there is a God who taketh care for his own.

Secondly, it is to be noted, that the nature and ingine of the very sons of God, in the time of their trouble, is to impute unto God some other affection than there is, or can be in him, towards his children; and sometimes to complain upon God, as that he did those things that in very deed he cannot do to his elect. David and Job often complain, that God had left them, was become their enemy, regarded not their prayers, and took no heed to deliver them. And yet, impossible it is that God either shall leave his chosen, or that he shall despise the humble petitions of such as call upon his support. But such complaints are the voices of the flesh, wherewith God is not offended to the rejection of his elect; but pardoneth them amongst other innumerable infirmities and sins.

<sup>1</sup> King Edward.



And, therefore, dearly beloved, despair you not, albeit the flesh sometimes bursteth out in heavy complaints, as it were, accusing God. You are not more perfect than was David and Job; and you cannot be so perfect as Christ himself was, who upon the cross cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Consider, dear mother, how lamentable and horrible<sup>1</sup> were these words in the only Son of God. And David, in Psalm lxxxviii, (which for better understanding I desire you to read,) complaineth upon God, that night and day he had cried and yet he was not delivered, "But (saith he) my soul is replenished with dolours; I am as a man without strength: I am like to those that are gone down into the pit, of whom thou hast no more mind; like unto those that are cut off by thy hand. Thou hast put me in a deep dungeon; all thy wrath lyeth upon me. Why leavest thou me, O Lord; why hidest thou thy face from me? Thou hast removed all my friends from me, thou hast made me odious unto them."—And thus he endeth his psalm and complaint, without mention of any comfort received. And Job, in divers places of his book, maketh even the like complaints, sometimes saying, that God was his enemy, and had set him, as it were, a mark to shoot at, and therefore that his soul desired the very destruction.

These things I recite unto you, dearly beloved, understanding what have been your troubles heretofore, and knowing, that Satan will not cease now to persuade your tender conscience, that none of God's elect have been in like case as you are. But by these precedents, and many other places which now to collect I have no opportunity, it plainly appeareth,

Alarming, Terrifying.

that God's chosen vessels have suffered the like temptations. I remember, that oft you have complained upon the grudging and murmuring that you found within yourself, fearing, that it provoked God to more displeasure. Behold and consider, dear mother, what God hath borne with in his saints before. Will he not bear the same with you, being most sorry for your imperfection? He cannot otherwise do; but as his wisdom hath made us all of one mass and nature, earth and earthly; and as he hath redeemed us with one price, the blood of his only Son, so must he, according to his promises, like mercifully pardon the offences of all those that incall the name of the Lord Jesus—of those, I mean, that refuse all other righteousness but his own.

But to our matter of these precedents.—Plain it is, that God's elect before you, suffered the like cross, as presently you suffer; that they have complained as you complain; that they have thought themselves abject, as you have thought, and yet may think yourself; and yet, nevertheless, they were sure in God's favour. Hope, dear mother, and look you for the same: hope, I say, against hope.

How horrible the pain is to endure that cross, none can express, except such as have proved it. Fearful it is for the very pain itself; but most fearful it is, for that the godly so tormented, judge God to be angry and in fury against them, as it is before expressed. Seeing we have found this cross to pertain to God's children, profitable it shall be and necessary to search out the causes of the same.

Plain it is, that not only God worketh all to the profit of his elect, but also, that he worketh it from such love towards them, and with such wisdom, that

otherwise things could not be. And this to understand is very profitable, partly to satisfy the grudging complaints of the flesh, which in trouble commonly questioneth, Why doth God this or that? And albeit in this earth the flesh can never be fully satisfied, but even as hunger and thirst from time to time assault it, so do other more gross imperfections; yet the inward man, with sobs to God, knowing the causes why the very just are sore troubled and tormented in body and spirit in this life, receiveth sure comfort, and getteth some stay of God's mercy, by knowing the causes of the trouble. All causes I may not here recite, but two or three of the principal I will touch.

The first is, to provoke in God's elect a hatred of sin, and unfeigned repentance of the same. Which cause, if it were rightly considered, were sufficient to make all spiritual and corporal troubles tolerable unto us. For since it is, that without repentance no man obtains God's mercy, (for it is now appointed by Him whose wisdom is infinite, I mean, of those that are converted to the conviction of sin,) and that without mercy no man can come to joy, is not that which letteth us understand what repentance is, gladly to be received and embraced?

Repentance containeth within it a knowledge of sin, a dolour for it, and a hatred of it, together with hope of mercy. It is very evident, that God's own children have not at all times the right knowledge of sin; that is to say, how odious it is before God; much less have they the dolour of it, and hatred of it. The which if they had, as they could not sin, so could they never be able, (having always the true sense of God's wrath against sin,) to delight in any thing that appertaineth to the flesh, more than the woman whom

God hath appointed by the help of man to produce mankind, could ever delight in man, if at all times she felt the same pangs of dolour and pain, that she doth in her child-birth. And therefore doth God, for such purposes as are known to himself, sometimes suspend from his own children this sense and feeling of his wrath against sin, as, no doubt, he did here with David, not only before his sin, but also some time after. But lest the sons of God should become altogether insolent, like the children of the world, he sendeth to them some portion of this foresaid cup, in drinking whereof they come to such knowledge, as they never had before. For, first, they feel the wrath of God working against sin, whereby they learn the justice of God to be even such as he himself pronounceth, and that he may suffer no sin unpunished. And thus begin they as well to mourn for their offences, as also, to hate the same, which otherwise they could never do; for nothing is so pleasing to the corrupt nature of man, as sin is; and things pleasing to nature, cannot nature of itself hate.

But in this conflict as God's children feel torments, and that most grievous; as they mourn, and by God's Holy Spirit, begin to hate sin, so come they also to a more high knowledge, that is, that a man cannot be saviour to himself. For how shall he save himself from hell, that cannot save himself from anguish and trouble here in the flesh, while yet he hath strength, wit, reason, and understanding? And therefore must he be compelled in his heart to acknowledge, that another Mediator there is betwixt God's justice and mankind, than any that ever descended of the corrupted seed of Adam, yea, than any creature that only

is a creature. And by the knowledge of this Mediator, at last the afflicted cometh to some sense and lively feeling of God's great mercies declared unto mankind, albeit they be not so sensibly felt as is the pain; and albeit the torment by this knowledge is not hastily removed, yet hath the patient some hope, that all griefs shall have end. And that is the cause why he sobbeth and groaneth for an end of pain; why also he blasphemeth not God, but crieth for his help, even in the midst of his anguish.

How profitable this is to the children of God, and what it worketh in them, as the plain Scripture teacheth, so experience lets us understand. Verily, even so profitable as it is to mourn for sin, to hate the same, to know the Mediator betwixt God and man, and finally, to know his love and mercy towards them, so necessary is it to drink this foresaid cup. What it worketh in them none know but such as taste it. In David, it is plain, it wrought humility and abjection of himself: it took from him the great trust that he had in himself: it made him daily to fear, and earnestly to pray, that afterwards he should not offend in like manner, or be left in his own hands. It made him lowly, although he was a king; it made him merciful, when he might have been rigorous; yea, it caused him to mourn for Absalom, his wicked son.

But to the rest of the causes.—The second cause why God permitteth his elect to taste of this bitter cup, is to raise up our hearts from these transitory vanities. For so foolish are we, and forgetful by nature, and so addicted are we to the things that are present, that unless we have another school-master than manly<sup>1</sup> reason, and some other spur and perpetual remembrance, than any that we can choose

<sup>1</sup> Human.

or devise ourselves, we neither can desire, neither yet rightly remember the departure from this vain and wicked world, to the kingdom that is prepared.

We are commanded daily to pray, "Thy kingdom come." Which petition asketh, that sin may cease, that death may be devoured, that transitory troubles may have an end, that Satan may be trodden under our feet, that the whole body of Christ may be restored to life, liberty, and joy; that the powers and kingdoms of this earth may be dissolved and destroyed, and that God the Father may be all in all things, after his Son Christ Jesus our Saviour hath rendered up the kingdom for ever.

For these things we are all commanded to pray—but which of us, at the time when all aboundeth with us, when neither body nor spirit hath trouble—from our hearts and without dissimulation can wish these things? Verily none. With our mouths we may speak the words, but the heart cannot thirst for the thing to come, except we be in such state, that worldly things are unsavoury unto us. And so can they never be, but under the cross. Neither yet under all kinds of crosses are worldly things unpleasant. For in poverty, riches do greatly delight many; for although they lack them, yet desire they to have them, and so are they neither unsavoury nor unpleasant: for things that we earnestly covet are not unpleasant unto us. But when things appertaining to the flesh are sufficiently ministered to us, and yet none of them can mollify our anguish or pain, then sobbeth the heart unto God, and unfeignedly wisheth an end of misery. And therefore our heavenly Father of his infinite wisdom, to hold us in continual remembrance, that in this wretched world there is

no rest, permitteth and suffereth us to be tempted and tried with this cross, that with an unfeigned heart we may desire not only an end of our own troubles, (for that shall come to us by death,) but also, of all the troubles of the Church of God; which shall not be before the again-coming of the Lord Jesus.

The third cause, I collect of Moses' words to the Israelites, saying, "The Lord thy God shall cast out these nations by little and little before thee: he will not cast them out all at once, lest perchance the wild beasts be multiplied against thee. And also when thou shalt enter into that good land, and shalt dwell in the houses that thou never buildedst, and that thou shalt eat and be filled, give thanks unto the Lord thy God, and beware that thou forget him not, and that thou say not in thy heart, The strength of mine own hand hath brought these great riches unto me." (Deut., vii, viii.)

In these words are two things appertaining to our matter most worthy to be noted, First, that Moses saith, that the Lord will not at once, but by little and little destroy these nations; adding the cause, "lest perchance," saith he, "the wild beasts be multiplied, and make uproar against thee." The Second, that when they had abundance, that then they should declare themselves mindful of God's benefits; and that they should not think that their own power, wisdom, nor provision, was any cause that they had the fruition of these commodities.

By these precedents, the Holy Ghost teacheth them, that like as they did not possess nor obtain the first interest of that land by their own strength, but that the Lord God did freely give it unto them, so likewise were they not able to brook nor enjoy the same by

any power of themselves ; for albeit that God should have in one moment destroyed all their enemies, yet, if he should not have been their perpetual safe-guard, the wild beasts should have troubled them. And if they had demanded the question, Why wilt thou not destroy the wild beasts also ?—he answereth, “Lest thou forget the Lord thy God, and say in thy heart, “My strength hath obtained this quietness unto myself.”

Consider, dearly beloved, that such things as the Spirit of God foresaw as dangerous and damnable unto them, the same things are to be feared in us ; for all things happened to them in figures. They were in Egypt corporally punished by a cruel tyrant ; we were in spiritual bondage of the devil, by sin and incredulity. God gave to them a land that flowed with milk and honey, for which they never laboured ; God hath opened to us the knowledge of Christ Jesus, which we never deserved nor yet hoped for. They were not able to defend the land, after they were possessed in it ; we are not able to retain ourselves in the true knowledge of Christ, but by his grace only. Some enemies were left to exercise them ; sin is left in us, that we may learn to fight. If enemies had not been, wild beasts should have multiplied amongst them : if such things as we think do most trouble us, were not permitted so to do, worse beasts should have dominion over us ; to wit, trust in ourselves, arrogance, oblivion, and forgetfulness of that estate from which God hath delivered us, together with a light estimation of all Christ’s merits—which sins are the beasts that, alas ! devour no small number of men. Neither let any man think, that if all kinds of crosses were taken from us, during the time that we bear the



earthly image of Adam, that we should be more perfect in using the spiritual gifts of God, to wit, the remission of sins, his free grace, and Christ's righteousness, for which we never laboured, than that people should have been in using of those corporal gifts. And Moses saith to them, "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God." He who knoweth the secrets of all hearts, giveth not his precepts in vain. If man's heart had not been prone and ready to forget God, and to glory in his own strength, God had not given this precept, and repeated it so diligently; for he neither doeth nor speaketh in vain. But knowing what things are most able to blind and deceive man, the wisdom of God by his contrary precepts, giveth him warning of the same. Experience hath taught us, how such beasts have troubled the church of God. To speak nothing of the time of the prophets, of the apostles, or of the primitive church, what trouble made Pelagius<sup>1</sup> by his heresy, affirming, that man by natural power and free will, might fulfill the law of God, and deserve for himself remission and grace. And to come a little nearer to our own age, hath it not been openly preached, and affirmed in schools, set out by writings, yea, and insisted by the world, that faith alone doth not justify, but that works do also justify? Hath it not been taught, that good works may go before faith, and provoke God to give his graces? What hath been taught of men's merits, and of the works of supererogation, some openly affirming, that some men have wrought more

<sup>1</sup> Pelagius, who is supposed to have been a native of Ireland, lived in the fifth century. His heresy produced such dissensions in the British church, as greatly accelerated the conquest of the country by the Saxons.

good works than were necessary to their own salvation? I pray you, consider if these men said not, Our hand and our strength have given these things unto us. What were these devilish heresies afore-said, and others that have infected the whole Papistry? Assuredly, they were cruel and ravening beasts, able to devour the souls of all those upon whom they get the upper hand. But the merciful providence of our God, willing our salvation, will not suffer us to come to that unthankfulness and oblivion; and therefore, he permitteth us, with his apostle Paul, to be buffeted by our enemies, to the end that we may mourn for sin, and hate the same; that we may know the only Mediator, and the dignity of his office; that we may unfeignedly thirst for the coming of the Lord Jesus; and that we neither be presumptuous, lightly esteeming Christ's death, neither yet unmindful of our former estate and miseries. And so, this cup is, as it were, a medicine prepared by the wisdom of our eternal Physician, who only knoweth the remedies for our corrupt nature.

Advert and mark, dear mother, that all cometh to us for our own most singular profit. It is a medicine, and therefore presently it cannot be pleasing. But how gladly would we use and receive, when our bodies were sick, how unpleasant and bitter soever it were to drink, that medicine which would remove sickness and restore health! But, oh, how much more ought we with patience and thanksgiving to receive this medicine of our Father's hands, that from our souls removeth so many mortal diseases, (his Holy Ghost so working by the same); such as pride, presumption, contempt of grace, and unthankfulness, which be the very mortal diseases that by unbelief do kill the soul;

and doth restore unto us lowliness, fear, invocation of God's name, remembrance of our own weakness, and of God's infinite benefits by Christ received; which be the very evident signs, that Jesus Christ liveth in us! What signs and tokens of these have appeared in you, and in others that be of your company, since your first profession of Christ, it needeth me not to rehearse. God grant, that the eyes of men be not blinded to their own perdition! Amen.

At present I may write no more unto you in this matter, beloved mother, but as God shall grant unto me more opportunity, by His grace who giveth all, you shall receive from my hands the rest of David's mind on this Psalm.

Most earnestly beseeching you in the bowels of Christ Jesus patiently to bear your present cross and dolour, which shortly shall vanish, and after shall never appear, I cannot express the pain which I think I might suffer to have the presence of you and of others that be like troubled, but a few days. But God shall gather us at his good pleasure, if not in this wretched and miserable life, yet in the estate where death may not dissever. My daily prayer is, for the sore afflicted in those quarters. Sometimes I have thought it impossible it had been, so to have removed my affection from the realm of Scotland, that any realm or nation could have been equally dear unto me. But God I take to record in my conscience, that the troubles present, and appearing yet to be in the realm of England, are doubly more dolorous to my heart, than ever were the troubles of Scotland. But of this to speak I now desist, beseeching God of his infinite mercy so to strengthen you, that in the weakest vessels Christ's power may appear.

My hearty commendation to all whom it concerns, I mean, to such as now boldly abide with Christ. I bid you as heartily farewell as can any wicked and corrupt man do, to the most especial friend.

In great haste and troubled heart,

Yours.

6TH OF JANUARY.

## A FORT FOR THE AFFLICTED,

IN AN

## EXPOSITION OF THE SIXTH PSALM.

## PART II.

**H**AVE *mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord, heal me, for all my bones are vexed.*—Now proceedeth David in his prayer, adding certain causes why he should be heard, and obtain his petitions. But first, we will speak of his prayers, as they be in order through this whole psalm.

David in sum desireth four things in this his vehement trouble. In the first verse, he asketh, that God may not punish him in his heavy displeasure and wrath. In the second verse, he asketh, that God should have mercy upon him. In the third verse, he desireth, that He should heal him; and in the fourth verse, he asketh that God should return unto him, and that He should save his soul. Every one of these things was so necessary unto David, that lacking any one of them, he judgeth himself unfortunate. He felt the wrath of God, and therefore desired the same to be removed; he had offended, and therefore desired mercy; he was fallen into most dangerous sickness, and therefore he cried for corporal health; God appeared to be departed from him, and therefore desired he, that the comfort of the Holy Ghost should return unto him. And thus was David, not as commonly are the most part of men in their prayers, who of a consuetude and custom oftentimes

do ask with their mouths such things as their hearts do not greatly desire to obtain.

But let us mark principally what things are to be noted in these his prayers, which he with earnest mind poured forth before God. Evident it is, that David in these his prayers sustained and felt the very sense of God's wrath; and also, that he understood clearly, that it was God only that troubled him, and that had laid that sore scourge upon him. And yet, no where else but at God alone (who appeared to be angry with him), seeketh he support or aid.

This is easy to be spoken; and the most part of men will judge it but a light matter, to fly to God in their troubles. I confess, indeed, that if our troubles come by man's tyranny, that then the most sure and most easy way is, to run to God for defence and aid. But let God appear to be our enemy, to be angry with us, and to have left us, how hard and difficult it is then to call for his grace, and for his assistance, none knoweth, except such as have learned it in experience; neither yet can any man so do, except the elect children of God. For so strong are the enemies that with great violence invade the troubled conscience in that troublesome battle, that unless the hidden seed of God should make them hope against hope, they could never look for any deliverance or comfort. The flesh lacks not reasons and persuasions to bring us from God. The devil, by himself, and by his messengers, dares boldly say and affirm, that we have nothing to do with God. And a weak faith is oft compelled to confess both the accusations and reasons to be most true. In time of trouble, the flesh doth reason, O wretched man! perceivest thou not that God is angry with thee? He plagueth

thee in his hot displeasure, therefore, it is in vain for thee to call upon Him. The devil, by his suggestion, or by his ministers, doth amplify and aggravate these precedents, affirming, and beating into the conscience of the sore afflicted, in this manner: God plagueth thee for thine iniquity: thou hast offended his holy law; therefore it is labour lost to cry for mercy or relief, for his justice must needs take vengeance upon all disobedient offenders. In this mean season, a weak faith is compelled to confess and acknowledge the accusations to be most true; for who can deny that he hath deserved God's punishments? The flesh feeleth the torments, and our own weakness crieth, All is true, and no point can be denied!

The vehemency of this battle, in the sickness of Hezekiah and in the history of Job, plainly may be espied. Hezekiah, after that with lamentable tears he had complained that his life was taken away, and cut off before his time; that violence was done unto him, and that God had bruised all his bones, like a lion; at last he saith, "Be thou surety for me, O Lord:"—but immediately upon these words, as it were correcting himself, he saith, "What shall I say? it is He that hath done it." (Isaiah, xxxviii.) As he would say, To what purpose complain I to him? If He had any pleasure in me, he would not have entreated me in this manner. It is He himself, whom I thought should have been my surety and defender, that hath wrapped me in all this wretched misery. He cannot be angry and merciful at once, (so judgeth the flesh,) for in Him there is no contrariety. I feel him to be angry with me, and therefore, it is in vain that I complain, or call upon him. This also may be espied in Job, who that after he

was accused by his friends, as one that had deserved the plague of God; and after that his wife had willed him to refuse all justice, and to curse God, and so to die—after his most grievous complaints, he saith, “When I called upon Him, and he hath answered, yet believe I not that He hath heard my voice.” (Job, ix.) As Job would say, So terrible are my torments, so vehement is my pain and anguish, that albeit, verily God had heard my humble petitions, yet feel I not that he will grant me my request. Here is a strong battle, when they perfectly understand, that remedy there is none but in God only; and yet, from God’s hand they look for no support, as might appear to men’s judgments. For he that saith that God punisheth him, and therefore cannot be merciful, and doubteth whether God hear him or not, appeareth to have cast away all hope of God’s deliverance.

These things put I you in mind of, beloved mother, that albeit your pains be sometimes so horrible, that no release nor comfort, you find neither in spirit nor body, yet if the heart can only sob unto God, despair not; you shall obtain your heart’s desire. And destitute you are not of faith: for at such time as the flesh, natural reason, the law of God, and present torment, and the devil at once do cry, God is angry, and therefore is there neither help nor remedy to be hoped for at his hands!—at such time, I say, to sob unto God, is the demonstration of the secret seed of God, which is hid in God’s elect children; and that only sob, is unto God a more acceptable sacrifice, than without this cross, to give our bodies to be burned even for the truth’s sake. For if God be present by assistance of his Holy Spirit, so that no



doubt is in our conscience but that assuredly we stand in God's favour, what can corporal trouble hurt the soul or mind, seeing the bitter frosty wind cannot hurt the body itself, which is most warmly covered, and clad from violence of the cold? But when the Spirit of God appeareth to be absent, yea, when God himself appeareth to be our enemy, then, to say, or to think, with Job in his trouble, "Albeit He should destroy or kill me, yet will I trust in him," oh, what is the strength and vehemency of the faith which so looketh for mercy, when the whole man feeleth nothing but dolours on every side! Assuredly, that hope shall never be confounded, for so it is promised by Him who cannot repent of his mercy and goodness.

Rejoice, mother, and fight to the end, for sure I am, that you are not utterly destitute of that Spirit who taught David and Job. What obedience I have heard you give to God in your most strong torment, it needeth me not to write; only I desire (which is a portion of my daily prayer,) God our Father, for Jesus Christ his Son's sake, that in all your trouble, you may continue as I have left you, and that with David you may sob. Albeit the mouth may not speak, yet let the heart groan, and say, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, and heal me!" and then, I nothing doubt your grievous torment shall not molest you for ever; but shortly shall have an end, to your everlasting consolation and comfort. You think, peradventure, that you would gladly call and pray for mercy, but the knowledge of your sins doth hinder you. Consider, dearly beloved, that all physic or medicine serves only for the patient; so doth mercy only for the sinner, yea, for the most wretched and miserable sinner. Did not David

understand himself to be a sinner, and adulterer, and a shedder of innocent blood? Yea, knew he not also that he was punished for his sins? Yes verily, he did, and therefore he called for mercy; which he that knoweth not the heaviness and multitude of sins can in nowise do, but most commonly doth despise mercy when it is offered; or at least, the man that feeleth not the burden of sin, lightly regardeth mercy, because he feeleth not how necessary it is unto him; as betwixt Christ and the proud Pharisees, in many places of the New Testament is to be seen. And therefore, dear mother, if your adversary trouble you either with your sins past or present, objecting, that mercy appertaineth not to you, by reason of your sins, answer unto him, as you are taught by Christ, that the whole need no physician, neither yet the just, mercy and pardon; but that Christ is come to give sight to the blind, and to call sinners to repentance, of whom you acknowledge yourself to be the greatest; and yet that you doubt not to obtain mercy, because it was never denied to any that asked the same, in faith. And thus, no doubt, you shall obtain victory by Christ Jesus, to whom be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

In the rest of David's prayers we will now be shorter, that we may come to the grounds of the same.

After the desiring of mercy, David now desireth a corporal benefit, saying, "*Heal me, Lord.*" Hereof is to be noted, that bodily health being the gift of God, may be asked of him without sin, albeit that we understand ourselves to be punished for our offences. Neither yet, in so praying, are we contrary to God's will; for his providence hath planted in the nature of

man a desire of health, and a desire that it may be preserved. And therefore, He is not offended, that we ask health of body when we lack it, neither yet, that we seek preservation of our health, by such ordinary means as he hath appointed, provided always, that God himself be first sought, and that we desire neither life, neither health, to the hinderance of God's glory, nor to the hurt and destruction of others, our brethren; but rather, that by us God's glory may be promoted, and that others, our brethren, by our strength, health, and life, may be comforted and defended. Now these precedents rightly observed, it is no sin earnestly to ask of God health of body, albeit we know our sickness to be the very hand of God punishing or correcting our former evil life.

This I write, because some are so severe, that they would not that we should ask bodily health of God, because the sickness is sent to us by him. But such men do not rightly understand, neither yet consider, that sickness is a trouble to the body, and that God commandeth us to call for his help in all our troubles. Surely our submission and prayers in such extremity, are the greatest glory that we can give unto God; for so doing, we think that his mercy aboundeth above his judgment, and so, we are bold to pray for the withdrawing of his scourge; which petition, no doubt, he must grant, for so he promiseth by Jeremiah, his prophet, saying, "If I have spoken against any nation or city, saying, that I will destroy it; and if it turn from iniquity, and repent, it shall repent me also of the plagues that I have spoken against it." (Jerem., xviii.) God promiseth to show mercy to a whole city or nation, if it repent; and will he not do the same to a particular person, if in his sickness he

call for grace? He hath showed unto us, that he will, by diverse examples; and specially by the leprosy of Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, which she received of the Lord's hand, punishing her high and haughty mind; and again, upon her submission, and at the prayer of Moses, she shortly was restored to health.

But to proceed, David moreover prayeth, "*Turn again, O Lord.*" It appeareth unto David, being in the extremity of his pain, that God was altogether departed from him; for so alway judgeth the flesh, yea, the whole man, when trouble worketh by any continuance of time. David had sustained trouble many days: he had prayed, and yet was not delivered: and therefore judgeth he, that God, being offended for his sins, had left him. And yet, plain it is, that God was with him, working in his heart by his Holy Spirit repentance: expressing forth those sobs and groans, as also, the desire he had to be restored to that comfort and consolation which sometimes he had felt, by the familiarity which he had with God. All these motions, I say, were the operations of God's Holy Spirit; and yet David could perceive no comfort nor presence of God in that his trouble, but lamentably complaineth, as before you have heard. Hereof it is plain, that the very elect sometimes are without all feeling of consolation, and that they think themselves altogether destitute, as may be seen in David.

But it is chiefly to be noted, that David in this his anguish remembereth, that God sometimes had been familiar with him; for he saith, "*Turn again, O Lord!*" signifying thereby, that before, he had felt the sweetness of God's presence, but now he was left to himself, without feeling of comfort or consolation. For

thus appeareth David to complain: Hast thou not been familiar with me, O Lord, thy unprofitable servant? Didst thou not call me from keeping sheep, to be anointed king over thy people, Israel? Didst thou not so encourage my mind, that I feared not the fresh strength of the cruel lion, neither yet the devouring teeth of the hungry bear, from whose jaws I delivered my sheep? Didst not thou once inflame my heart with the zeal of thy holy name, that when all Israel were so afraid, that none durst encounter with that monster, Goliath, yet thy Spirit made me so bold and so valiant, that without harness or weapons, except my sling, staff, and stones, I durst enterprise singular battle<sup>1</sup> against him? Was it not thy strength that gave me victory, not only at that time, but also of all my other enemies that have sought my life since? Hast not thou made me so glad by the multitude of thy mercies, and thy most gracious favour, which thou from time to time most abundantly hast poured upon me, that both soul and body have rejoiced through the gladness of thy countenance? Hast thou not been so effectually present with me in troubles and dangers, that my very enemies have known and confessed, that thy power was always with me, and that thou didst take my defence upon thyself? And wilt thou now so leave the habitation which thou hast chosen? Shall it be left desolate for ever? Can thy mercies have an end; and shall thy fatherly pity never appear more unto me? Shalt thou leave me for ever thus to be tormented, whom thou hast before so abundantly comforted? O Lord, I am sure, thy mercies will not so entreat me; and therefore turn again, O Lord, and make me glad with thy countenance, whom a long time thou hast left void of consolation and joy.

<sup>1</sup> Single combat.

Advert and consider, dearly beloved, in what estate was David when he had no other comfort, except the remembrance only of God's former benefits showed unto him. And, therefore, marvel you not, nor yet despair ye, albeit that you find yourself in the same case that David was. Sure I am, that your own heart must confess, that you have received like benefits at the hands of God as David did. He hath called you from a more vile office than from the keeping of sheep, to as great a dignity (touching the everlasting inheritance) as he did David. For, from the service of the devil and sin, he hath anointed us priests and kings, by the blood of his only Son Jesus. He hath given you courage and boldness to fight against more cruel, more subtle, more dangerous enemies, and against enemies that be more nigh unto you, than either was the lion, the bear, or Goliath, to David—against the devil, I mean, and his assaults; against your own flesh, and most inward affections; against the multitude of them that were, and yet remain enemies to Christ's religion; yea, against some of your most natural friends, who appear to profess Christ with you; and in that part, the battle is the more vehement. What boldness I have seen with you in all such conflicts, it needeth me not to rehearse. I write this to the praise of God, I have wondered at that bold constancy which I have found in you, at such time as mine own heart was faint. Sure I am, that flesh and blood could never have persuaded you to have contemned and set at nought those things that the world most esteemeth. You have tasted and felt of God's goodness and mercies in such measure, that not only you are able to reason and speak, but also, by the Spirit of God

working in you, to give comfort and consolation to such as were in trouble. And therefore, most dear mother, think not that God will leave his own mansion for ever. No, impossible it is that the devil shall occupy God's inheritance; or yet, that God shall so leave and forsake his holy temple that he will not sanctify the same. Again, God sometimes suspendeth his own presence from his elected, as here by David may be espied; and very often he suffereth his elect to taste of bitterness and grief, for such causes as are before expressed. But to suffer them to be wrested out of his hands, that he neither will nor may permit; for so were he a mutable God, and have given his glory to another, if he permitted himself to be overcome of his adversary; which is as like impossible, as it is that God shall cease to be God.

Now, lastly, David prayeth, "*Deliver my soul, and save me.*" In this prayer, no doubt, David desired to be delivered from the very corporal death at that time, and his soul to be saved from those present plagues and grievous torments that he sustained. In which, it might appear to some, that he was more addicted to this present life, and that he loved more the quietness of the flesh, than it became a spiritual man to do. But as before is said, God hath naturally ingrafted and planted in man this love of life, tranquillity, and rest; and the most spiritual man often desireth them, because they are seals and witnesses of that league and fellowship which is between God and his elect. And albeit that trouble most commonly doth follow the friends of God, yet is He nothing offended, that earnestly we ask our quiet; neither is that our desire any declaration of carnality, or of inordinate love that we have to the world, considering that the final cause

wherefore we desire to live is, not for enjoying of worldly pleasures—for many times in the midst of these, we grant and confess, that better it is to be absent from the body—but the chief cause why God's elect do desire life, or to have rest on earth, is for the maintenance of God's glory, and that others may see, that God taketh a care over his elected.

But now, to the grounds and foundations of David's prayers, and whereupon his prayers do stand. The first is taken from the vehement trouble which he sustained, and from the long continuance of the same: the second is taken from the goodness of God; and the third from God's glory, and from the insolent rage of his enemies.

Here is to be observed and noted, that neither is trouble, neither long continuance of the same, neither yet the proud and haughty minds of wicked men, the chief moving cause why God heareth our prayers, and declareth himself merciful unto us; and therefore, they may not be the sure and sound foundations of our prayers: but only God's infinite goodness is the fountain of all mercy and grace, which springeth and cometh to us by Christ Jesus, his Son. But they are causes, by operation of the Holy Ghost helping our weakness to believe and to trust, that God who is Father of mercies, will not be angry for ever at the sore afflicted, neither yet that he will punish without mercy such as call for his help and comfort; as also, that God, who hath always declared himself enemy to pride, will not suffer the proud and obstinate contemners of his poor saints long to blaspheme his lenity and gentleness; but that he will pour forth his plagues upon them, according to his threatenings. And so, our troubles, and the tyranny of our enemies,



are in that behalf foundations whereupon our prayers may stand, as here appeareth.

David describeth his dolour, and the continuance thereof, in these words, "*I am consumed away with sickness : all my bones are vexed, and my soul is in horrible fear ; but, Lord, how long wilt thou thus entreat me ? I am wearied for sobbing : I water my bed with my tears.*"—Let us imagine that David thus speaketh : O Lord, mayest thou, who ever hast taken care of me from my mother's womb, now forget me, the workmanship of thine own hands ? Mayest thou, that hast declared thyself so merciful unto me in all my tribulations, now, in the end, take thy mercies clean from me ? Hast thou no pity, O Lord ? Dost thou not behold that I am pined and consumed by this grievous torment, wherein not only is my tender flesh, but also my very bones, (the strongest part of the body,) so vexed, that neither is there beauty nor strength left unto me ? If these anguishes occupied the body only, yet were the pain almost insufferable ; but, O Lord, so horribly is my soul tormented, that albeit it be immortal, yet it so quaketh and trembleth, as if very death should devour it. And thus I sustain most grievous torments both in body and soul, of so long continuance, that it appeareth unto me, thou hast forgotten to be merciful. O Lord, how long wilt thou entreat me in this manner. Hast thou forgotten thy loving mercies ; or hast thou lost thy fatherly pity ? I have no longer strength to cry, yea, and for sobs and groans I am so weary, that my breath faileth me ; the tears of mine eyes wherewith nightly I have wet my bed, have borne witness of my unfeigned dolour ; but now, my eyes are waxen dim, and my whole strength is dried up.

In all these lamentable complaints, David speaketh unto God, as he would speak to a man who was ignorant what another man suffered; whereof it may be understood how the most prudent and the most spiritual man judgeth of God in the time of trouble. Assuredly he thought that God taketh no care for him; and therefore doth he, as it were, accuse God of unmindfulness, and that he looketh not upon him with the eyes of his accustomed mercy, as clearly by these words may be espied. And yet are David's troubles the first ground and cause why he maketh his prayers, and claimeth to be heard: not that troubles, as before is noted, are sufficient by themselves for God's deliverance; but in recounting his dolour, David hath a secret access to God's mercy, which he challengeth and claimeth of duty to appertain to all His, who in the time of trouble call for his support, help, and aid. And it is the same ground that Job taketh, where he saith, "Is it profitable unto thee, that thou violently oppress me? Wilt thou despise the work of thine own hands? Thou hast formed and made me altogether; and wilt thou now devour me? Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast fashioned me as a mould, and that thou shalt bring me to dust: thou hast covered me with skin and flesh; with sinews and bones hast thou joined me, with life and gentleness hast thou beautified me, and thy prudence hath kept my spirit." (Job, x.) Here may be espied upon what ground these two stood in their most grievous pains. Their trouble moved them to complain, and to appeal to the great mercy of God, which, as they allege, even so is it most sure, he may deny to none that ask it: for as the trouble of his creatures is no advantage unto God, so, to deny mercy when it is asked, were to deny himself.

And herein, dearly beloved, I heartily wish you to rejoice. For I can be witness, how constantly you have called for grace, in your anguishes; and your own conscience must testify, that oftentimes you have found release and comfort in such measure, that you have been bold to triumph against your adversaries, in Christ Jesus our Saviour. Be nothing afraid, albeit presently you feel not your accustomed consolation. That shall hurt you no more, than the troubles of David and Job did hurt them, who in the time that they spake these former words, found no more consolation than you do now, in the most extremity of your trouble. Neither yet did they hastily obtain comfort: for David saith, "O Lord, how long wilt thou so cruelly punish me?" And yet, we know most assuredly, that they were heard, and that they obtained their own heart's desire; as no doubt every man shall, who in time of trouble, be it spiritual or corporal, appealeth to God's mercy alone.

The second ground and foundation whereupon the prayers of David stand, is the infinite goodness of God. For thus he saith, "Save me, O God, for thy goodness." David before had asked mercy, and declared his complaints: but now, searching himself secretly in his conscience, he reasons with himself in this manner, Why should God show mercy unto him that so heinously had offended, and that justly was tormented by God's hand, for his transgression and sin? No other ground that is always sure and permanent findeth he, except God's infinite goodness, which he espieth to be the only stay which neither tempest of winds, neither floods of water, are able to overthrow nor undermine. And, oh! how piercing are the eyes of Faith, that in so deep a

dungeon of desperation, can yet espy in the midst of that troublesome darkness, goodness to remain in God; yea, and such goodness, as is sufficient and able to overcome, devour, and swallow up, all the iniquities of his elect, so that none of them are able to withstand or hinder God's infinite goodness, to show his mercy to his troubled children. Hereby are we taught, beloved mother, in the extremity of our troubles to run to God's only goodness, there to seek comfort by Jesus Christ, and no where else. I fear nothing the blasphemous voices of such, nor their ragings against God, and against his only eternal Verity, that are not ashamed to affirm, that this kind of doctrine maketh men negligent to do good works; against whom no otherwise will I contend, than doth the apostle, saying, "Their damnation is just." For my purpose and mind is, to edify those whom God hath called from darkness to light; whose eyes it hath pleased his mercy so to open, that evidently they feel the flesh to rebel against the spirit, even in the hour of their greatest perfection, in such manner, that all power, all justice, all virtue proceeding from us, is so contaminated and defiled, that the very works which we do, must be purged by another; and that therefore, none of them can be an infallible ground of our prayer, neither yet a sufficient cause why we should be heard. But the goodness of God, as it is infinite, so can it not be defiled by our iniquity. But it pierceth through the same, and will show itself to our consolation, even as the beams of the bright sun pierce through the misty and thick cloud, and bring down his natural heat, to comfort and quicken such herbs and creatures, as through violence of cold were almost fallen into deadly decay.

And thus, the only goodness of God remaineth, in all storms, the sure foundation to the afflicted, against which, the devil is never able to prevail. The knowledge of this is so necessary to the afflicted conscience, that without the same, it is very hard to withstand the assaults of the adversary. For as he is a spirit most subtle and vigilant to trouble the children of God, so is it easy for him to deface and undermine all the grounds and causes that are within man, and especially, when we are in trouble; yea, he can persuade us, that we lack those things which most assuredly we have by God's free gift and grace. As for example, if we desire to be delivered from trouble and anguish of conscience, with David and Job, the devil can suddenly object, What appertaineth their example to thee? they had many notable and singular virtues which thou lackest. If we desire remission of sins, with Magdalene, with Peter, or with any other offenders, he hath these darts ready to shoot; They had faith, but thou hast none: they had true repentance, thou art but a hypocrite: they hated sin, and continued in good works; but thou rejoicest in sin, and doest no good at all. By these means can he, who is the accuser of us and of our brethren, ever find out some crafty accusation to trouble the weak conscience of the afflicted, so long as ever it resteth upon any thing within itself, and till by the operation of the Holy Ghost, we are ravished and reft up to the contemplation of our God, so that our minds are fixed only upon God's infinite goodness; claiming by the same to receive mercy, as Job doth in his former words, of which the sense and meaning is this: O Lord, thou madest me, when yet I was not; thou gavest me soul and body, when I neither knew

nor understood what thy power was: thou feddest and nourishedst me, when I could do nothing but weep and mourn. And thy merciful providence unto this day hath preserved my life; and yet neither I, nor my works could profit thee; for thou, whose habitation is in heaven, needest not the help of man. And as for my works, such as the fountain is, such must the waters be. My heart is corrupted; how then can any thing that is clean, proceed from the same? And so, whatever I have received, that either was, is, or hereafter shall be within my corrupt nature, all proceedeth from thine infinite goodness, who didst begin to show thy mercy, before I knew thee. Canst thou then leave me thus in my extremity? I grant and confess, that I have offended; but is there any creature clean and perfect in such perfection, that without mercy, he may abide the trial of thy justice? Or is there any iniquity now in me, which thy wisdom did not know before? And thus, appeal I to thy mercy, which springeth from thy infinite goodness. Oh, dear mother! when thy afflicted soul can thus forsake and refuse whatever is in man, and can stay itself, how little soever it be, upon God's infinite goodness, then are all the fiery darts of the devil quenched, and he is repulsed as a confounded spirit. It shall nothing hurt, albeit the stormy tempest cease not suddenly. That is sufficient, that this anchor be cast out, which assuredly shall preserve your ship, that she violently run not upon the foreland of desperation.

This I write, beloved in the Lord, knowing what have been your complaints heretofore, in that you found your faith faint; that you could not repent your former evil life; that you found no disposition nor

readiness to good works, but were rather carried away of sin and wickedness. If all this had been true, yet had you been in no worse case than was the apostle Paul, when he cried, "Oh, wretched and unhappy man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin?" But I assuredly know, that the chief part of your trouble proceedeth from malice and envy of the devil, who would persuade your heart, that you delighted in those things which to you were most displeasing. For how oft have you complained upon the weakness of your faith! How oft have you lamented the imperfection of your flesh! The tears of your eyes have witnessed before God, that you delighted not in such things as your adversary falsely layeth to your charge. For who useth continually to mourn in those things that are pleasing to his heart, if they be present with him at all times? Or who will desire things pleasing to be removed from him? You have mourned for your weakness, and have desired your imperfection to be removed, and you have detested all sorts of idolatry. How then can you think, that you take any pleasure in the same? Despair not, although that all remembrance of God's goodness, or worthiness be removed from your mind. You have David, Job, Daniel, and all the other saints of God, in equal sort with you. Of David and Job you have heard. And Isaiah making his heavy complaint for the plagues of the people of Israel, openly confesseth, that all had sinned; that their righteousness was nothing but filthiness; that none sought God; that none called upon his name. And Daniel in his prayer likewise confesseth, that all had wrought wickedly; that all had declined from God; yea, and that none had submitted themselves to God, nor yet had

made supplication unto him, albeit he had punished their former disobedience. And, therefore, he saith, that they did not allege their own righteousness in their prayers. Consider, dear mother, that no mention is made of any righteousness that was within themselves, neither yet do they glory of any works or virtues which they had wrought before; for they understood, that God was the author of all goodness, and therefore, to him only appertained the praise. But as for their sins, they understood them to be the infirmities of their own flesh; and therefore boldly called they for mercy, and that, by God's infinite goodness, which is no less free unto you, than unto them, according to the riches of his liberal graces which he plentifully poureth forth upon all them that incall on the name of the Lord Jesus.

The third and last ground of David's prayers was, the glory and praise of God's name to be showed and uttered in his life, as in these words he declareth, "*For there is no remembrance of thee in death: who laudeth thee in the pit?*" As David would say, O Lord, how shall I pray and declare thy goodness, when I am dead, and gone down into the grave? It is not thy ordinary course, to have thy miracles and wondrous works preached unto men, by those that are buried, and gone down into the pit: those that are dead, make no mention of thee in the earth. And therefore, O Lord, spare thy servant, that yet, for a time, I may show and witness thy wondrous works unto mankind.

These most godly affections in David, did engender in him a vehement horror and fear of death, besides that which is natural and common to all men, because he perfectly understood, that by death he should be hindered any further to advance the glory of God.



Of this same he complaineth most vehemently in Psalm lxxxviii, where apparently he taketh from the dead, sense, remembrance, feeling, and understanding, alleging, that God worketh no miracles by the dead; that the goodness of God cannot be preached in the grave, nor his faith by perdition; and that his marvellous works are not known in darkness. By which speeches we may not understand, that David taketh all sense and feeling from the dead; neither yet, that they which are dead in Christ, are in such estate, that by God they have not consolation and life. No, Christ himself doth witness the contrary. But David so vehemently expresseth their estate and condition, because that after death, they are deprived of all ordinary ministration in the church of God. None of those that are departed, are appointed to be preachers of God's glory to mankind; but after death they cease any more to advance God's holy name here, amongst the living on earth; and so, shall even they in that behalf be unprofitable to the congregation, as touching any thing that they can do either in body or soul, after death. And therefore, most earnestly desired David to live in Israel, for the further manifestation of God's glory.

Here is to be observed a short, but yet a most necessary note, which is this: What be the things that we ought principally to seek in this transitory life? Not those for the which the blind world contendeth and striveth; but God, and his loving kindness towards mankind; his amiable promises, and true religion to be advanced and preached unto others, our brethren, that be ignorant: for if so we do not, we may rather be counted beasts than men; dead stocks, not living creatures; yea, rather things that be not at all, than

## A FORT FOR THE AFFLICTED,

substance having either being or life. Seeing that the heavens declare the glory of God; that the earth, with the whole contents thereof, whatever they be, give praise to his holy name; that the sea, floods, and fountains, with the wonders contained in the same, do not cease to make manifest the wisdom, the power, and the providence of their Creator, what then shall be said of man, who neither seeketh neither regardeth God's glory? Yea, what shall be judged of those who not only hinder God's glory, but also, declare themselves enemies to such as would promote it? I must speak my conscience with a sorrowful heart: they are not only dead, but they are also of the nature of him, by whose malice and envy, death entered into the world, that is, of the devil. But them I omit at this present, because their accusation doth not much appertain to this our matter, whereof now I must make an end, somewhat contrary to my mind; for so I am compelled by some present troubles, as well of body, as of spirit. The fourth part of this psalm I omit till more opportunity; for it doth not much appertain to the spiritual cross, but is, as it were, a prophecy spoken against all such, as rejoice at the troubles of God's elect; who assuredly shall be confounded, and brought to shame, when the Lord shall hear the voices of the sorely afflicted.

Now, dearly beloved in our Saviour Jesus Christ, seeing that the spiritual cross is proper to the children of God; seeing that it is given to us, as a most effectual medicine, as well to remove diseases, as to plant in our souls most notable virtues, such as humility, mercy, contempt of ourselves, and continual remembrance of our own weakness and imperfection; and seeing that you have had most evident signs, that this

same medicine hath wrought in you a part of all the promises, receive it thankfully of your Father's hand, what trouble soever it bring with it; and albeit that the flesh grudge, yet let the spirit rejoice, steadfastly looking for deliverance, and assuredly you shall obtain, according to the good will and promise of Him who cannot deceive; to whom be glory for ever and ever, before his congregation. Amen.

Now, seeing it is uncertain, beloved mother, if ever we shall meet in this corporal life—which words I will not that you take in any displeasure; for if God continue you in life, and me in corporal health, I shall attempt to speak with you face to face, within less time than is passed since the one of us last saw the other—and be you assured, beloved mother, that it shall neither be the fear of death, nor the rage of the devil that shall impede or hinder me: and therefore, I beseech you, take not my words in that part, as though I were not minded to visit you again. No, I assure you, that only God's hand shall withhold me. But because our life doth vanish, as the smoke before the blast of wind, my conscience moveth me to write to you, as though I should take from you my last good night on earth. The sum whereof is this—to exhort and admonish you, even as you will have part with Christ Jesus, to continue in the doctrine to the end, which before the world you have professed. For before God, before Christ Jesus his Son, and before his holy angels, neither shame I to confess, neither doubt I to affirm, that the doctrine which you and others have heard not only from my mouth, but also faithfully taught by the mouths of many others, of whom some are exiled, some cruelly cast into prison, and the rest commanded to silence, is the only

word of life ; and that all doctrine repugning to the same, is diabolical and erroneous, which assuredly shall bring death and perpetual condemnation to all those who thereto shall condescend and agree. And therefore, mother, be not moved with any wind, but stick to Christ in the day of this his battle. And also, I admonish you, to avoid that abomination which you have often heard affirmed by me to be damnable idolatry. And God I take to record in my conscience, that neither then, neither now, I spoke, nor do speak for pleasure or hatred of any living creature on earth whatsoever it be, but as my conscience was certified by the infallible and plain word of God, from which, I praise my most merciful Father, I am not this day one jot removed. Neither repent I of that my blessed and most happy society with the truth of Christ's gospel, unto which it hath pleased God to call me, the most wretched of others. Neither forethink I, that God hath made me an open and manifest enemy to papistry, superstition, and to all that filthy idolatry which is newly erected in God's hot displeasure ; neither yet would I recant (as they term it) one sentence of my former doctrine, for all the glory, riches, and rest that is on earth. And in conclusion, I would not bow my knee before that most abominable idol, for all the torments that earthly tyrants can devise, God so assisting me, as his Holy Spirit presently moveth me to write unfeignedly. And albeit that I have in the beginning of this battle appeared to play the faint-hearted and feeble soldier, (the cause I remit to God,) yet my prayer is, that I may be restored to the battle again.

And blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I am not left so bare without comfort, but my

hope is to obtain such mercy, that if a sudden end be not made of all my miseries by final death, which to me were no small advantage, that yet, by Him who never despised the sobs of the sore afflicted, I shall be so encouraged to fight, that England and Scotland shall both know, that I am ready to suffer more than either poverty or exile, for the profession of that doctrine, and that heavenly religion, whereof it hath pleased His merciful providence to make me, amongst others, a simple soldier and witness-bearer to men. And therefore, mother, let no fear enter into your heart, as that I, escaping the furious rage of those ravening wolves that for our unthankfulness are lately loosed from their bonds, do repent any thing of my former fervency. No, mother: for a few sermons to be made by me within England, my heart at this hour could be content to suffer more, than nature were able to sustain; as by the grace of the most mighty and most merciful God, who only is the God of comfort and consolation, through Christ Jesus, one day shall be known.

In the mean season, yet once again, as if it were my final good-night, and last testament on this earth, in the bowels of Christ Jesus I exhort and admonish you, constantly to continue with the Verity, which shall yet triumph, and obtain victory, in despite of Satan and his malice. And avoid idolatry, the maintainers and obeyers whereof shall not escape the sudden vengeance of God, which shall be poured forth upon them, according to the ripeness of their iniquity; and when they shall cry "Quietness and peace!" (which never remained of any continuance with the ungodly,) then shall their sudden destruction come upon them without provision.

The God of peace and consolation, who of his power infinite and invincible hath called from death the true and great Bishop of our souls, and in him hath placed our flesh above principalities and powers of what pre-eminence soever they be in heaven or in earth, assist you with his Holy Ghost in such constancy and strength, that Satan and his assaults may be confounded now and ever, in you, and in the congregation, by Christ Jesus our Lord: to whom with the Father and with the Holy Ghost be all praise and honour eternally.—Amen.

Yours with sorrowful heart,

J. K.

*Watch and pray.*

## A COMFORTABLE EPISTLE,

SENT TO THE AFFLICTED CHURCH OF CHRIST, EXHORTING THEM TO BEAR HIS CROSS WITH PATIENCE, LOOKING EVERY HOUR FOR HIS COMING AGAIN, TO THE GREAT COMFORT AND CONSOLATION OF HIS CHOSEN; WITH A PROPHECY OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WICKED.

“Pass through the city, and put a sign on the foreheads of those that mourn for the abominations that are committed.”—EZEK., ix.

WHEN I ponder with myself, beloved in the Lord, what was the estate of Christ's true church immediately after his death and passion, and what were the changes and great mutations in the commonwealth of Judea before the final desolation of the same—as I cannot but fear, that like plagues for like offences shall strike the realm of England, and in fearing, God knoweth, I lament and mourn—so can I not but rejoice, knowing that God's most merciful providence is no less careful this day over his weak and feeble servants in the realm of England, than it was that day, over his weak and sore oppressed flock in Jewry.

What was the estate of Christ's church between his death and resurrection, and from his resurrection to the sending of the Holy Ghost upon his disciples, and from that time also, to the final destruction of Jerusalem, the plain Scripture doth witness; that it was most afflicted, without all comfort and worldly consolation; and that it was so persecuted, that havoc was made over the church of God. And what were

the mutations and troubles in Judea and Jerusalem, before the destruction of the same, such as are exercised in histories, and principally in Josephus and Egesippus, cannot be ignorant. For they witness, that over that unthankful people, were permitted to reign cruel, tyrannous, and most ungodly magistrates, by whom the people were oppressed and spoiled of their liberties; by which occasion was stirred up sedition, and thereupon followed so cruel tyranny, that under the name of justice, no small number of the people were burnt alive. After which cruelty, followed such murder universally in the city and in the fields, that the fathers feared their sons, and the brethren their brethren. Which unquietness ceased not, until God's severe vengeance was once poured forth upon such as obstinately refused, and persecuted Christ Jesus and his doctrine.

But to return to the entreatment and preservation of Christ's church all this time; it is evident, that most sharply it was persecuted, and yet daily did it increase and multiply. It was compelled to fly from city to city, from realm to realm, and from one nation to another. And yet, so wondrously was it preserved, that a great number of those whom the wicked priests by their bloody tyranny exiled and banished from Jerusalem, were kept alive, till God's vengeance was poured forth upon that most wicked generation. The remembrance of this, beloved in the Lord, is unto my heart such comfort and consolation, that neither can my tongue nor pen express the same. For this assuredly is my hope and expectation, that like as Christ Jesus appeared to his disciples, when there was nothing in their hearts but anguish and desperation; and like as he preserved and multiplied their number



under the most extreme persecution, so shall he do to his afflicted flock within the realm of England, this day in spite of all his enemies. First, I say, this is my hope, that a just vengeance shall be taken upon those blood-thirsty tyrants, by whom Christ Jesus in his members is now crucified amongst you ; and after that, his merit shall so appear, to the comfort of those that now do mourn, that they shall hear and know the voice of their own pastor. And this shall our merciful God do unto us, to let us know, and in practice understand, that his promises are infallible ; and that he will not treat us according to the wicked weakness of our corrupt nature, which always is ready to fall from God, to distrust his promises, and to forget that ever we have received benefit or comfort from God's hand, when trouble lieth upon us, or when extreme danger doth appear.

And therefore, beloved in the Lord, albeit you find your hearts sometimes assaulted with dolour, with grudging, or with some kind of desperation, yet despair not utterly, neither be ye troubled above measure, as that Christ Jesus should never visit you again. Not so, dear brethren, not so ; for such imperfections rested with Christ's own apostles for a long time, and yet did they not hinder his again coming unto them. No more shall our weakness and imperfections hinder or let the brightness of his countenance, and the comfort of his Word yet once again to shine before us, provided always that Judas his obstinacy, his impenitence, and traitorous heart be absent from us ; as I doubt not but it is from all the members of Christ's body, who are permitted sometimes to fall, so that of the most fervent professors, they become fearful deniers of the most known truth. But they are not

permitted of any continuance to blaspheme, neither to remain in unbelief and desperation to the end, as in Christ's apostles plainly may be seen. And that more clearly we may understand our times and estate within the realm of England this day, to agree with the time and estate of Christ's disciples immediately after his death, let us consider what chanced to them before and after the same.

Before Christ's passion, as they were instructed by Christ's own mouth of many things appertaining to that kingdom of God, which they neither perfectly understood, neither worthily then regarded, so were they advertised, and oft admonished, that Christ their master should suffer a cruel death; that they should be ashamed, slandered, and offended in him; that they should fly from him; and finally, that persecution and trouble from time to time should apprehend them. With these most dolorous tidings he also promised that he should arise upon the third day, that he should see them again to their comfort and consolation, and that he should mightily deliver them from all troubles and adversities.

But what availed all these admonitions to Christ's disciples before his death, or in the extremity of their anguish shortly after the same? Did they fear, and verily look for trouble before it came? Or did they look for any comfort when the fore-spoken trouble was come? It is most evident, that no such thing did enter into their hearts. For before Christ's death, their greatest mind was upon worldly honour, for which sometimes they debated and contended among themselves, yea, even when Christ was most earnestly preaching of his cross, (Luke, xxii): and after his death they were so oppressed with anguish, with care,

with dolour and desperation, that neither could the witnessing of the women affirming that they had seen Christ, neither the grave left empty and void, neither the angels who did appear to certify his resurrection, neither yet the very voice and presence of Christ Jesus himself, remove all doubts from their afflicted hearts. But from time to time their minds wavered, and fully could not be established, that their Lord and master was verily risen to their comfort, according to his former promises. (Luke, xxiv, John, xx, Matt., xxviii.)

In this case, consider I the true professors of Christ's holy Evangel to be this day, in the realm of England. For these days of our present dolour and tribulation, have been before spoken and blown in our ears, long before they came. Our weakness and frail infirmity was also painted forth before our eyes. But who would have believed that the days of our trouble had been so nigh? or that so short a tempest should have overthrown so great a multitude? I think, no man within the whole realm. For all men appeared to live in such careless security, as that the immutable sentence of God pronouncing, that whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution, (2 Tim., iii,) had nothing appertained to our age. And such a bold confidence, or rather, a vain persuasion had a great number of their own strength, that if they had continued without any backsliding, they might have been judged rather angels than men.

But, beloved in the Lord, the sword of anguish and of dolour hath now pierced the tender heart of Christ's mother, (that is, of his very church,) that the cogitations of many hearts are sufficiently revealed. (Luke, ii.) The fire is come, which as it hath burnt away

with a blast the stubble, hay, and wood, (1 Cor., iii,) so in trying the gold, silver, and precious stones, it hath found such dross and dust, that the whole mass may appear to be consumed. For who now calleth to mind, that the same voice which fore-spake our dolours, fore-spake also our everlasting comfort with Christ Jesus? Who delighteth now in his amiable promises? Who rejoiceth under the cross? Yea, who rather doth not fear, tremble, grudge, and lament, as that there were no help in God, or as that he regarded not the trouble which we suffer? These are the imperfections that continually remain in this our corrupt nature, the knowledge whereof ought to move us earnestly to cry, "O Lord, increase our faith. Be merciful unto us, and let us not drown in the deep for ever." Which if we do with unfeigned hearts, then yet shall Christ Jesus appear to our comfort: his power shall be known to the praise and glory of his own name, in despite of all his conjured enemies.

And this is the chief and principal cause of my comfort and consolation in these most dolorous days, that neither can our infirmities, nor daily desperation, hinder or let Christ Jesus to return to us again. The other cause of my comfort is, that I am assured that the judgment of these tyrants that now oppress us, shall not slip, but that vengeance shall fall upon them without provision. For sufficiently they have declared the malice of their minds; they have violated the law and holy ordinances of the Lord our God; they have opened their mouths against his eternal verity; they have exiled his truth, and established their own lies. They daily persecute the innocents, and stoutly maintain open murderers. Their hearts are obdurate, and their faces are become shameless, like harlots, so that

no hope of repentance nor amendment is to be had of them. And therefore, destruction shall suddenly fall upon them. But with what kind of plagues they shall be stricken in this life, and whom God shall appoint to execute his vengeance upon them, that remit I to his good pleasure and further revelation. But their manifest iniquity is unto me an assured assurance that long they cannot escape the vengeance of them most justly deserved.

But in the mean season, beloved brethren, two things ye must avoid: the former, that ye presume not to be revengers of your own cause, but that ye resign over vengeance unto Him who only is able to requite them, according to their malicious minds. Secondly, that ye hate not with any carnal hatred these blind, cruel, and malicious tyrants; but that ye learn of Christ to pray for your persecutors, (Matt., v,) lamenting and bewailing, that the devil should so prevail against them, that headlong they should run, body and soul, to perpetual perdition. And note well, that I say, we may not hate them with a carnal hatred, that is to say, only because they trouble our bodies. For there is a spiritual hatred which David calleth a perfect hatred, (Psalm cxxxix,) which the Holy Ghost engendereth in the hearts of God's elect, against the rebellious contemners of his holy statutes; and it is, when we more lament that God's glory is suppressed, and that Christ's flock is defrauded of their wholesome food, than that our bodies are persecuted. With this hatred was Jeremiah inflamed, when he prayed, "Let me see thy vengeance taken upon thine enemies, O Lord." (Jerem., ii, xvii, xx.) With this hatred may we hate tyrants, and earnestly may we pray for their destruction, be they kings or

queens, princes or prelates. And further ye shall note, that the prayers made in the fervency of this hatred, are before God so acceptable, that oftentimes he that prayeth, obtaineth the self-same thing that the external words of his prayer do mean; as David, Jeremiah, and others of the prophets, saw with their corporal eyes the hot vengeance of God poured forth upon the cruel tyrants of their age. And I am assured, that some who this day do sob and groan under your tyrannous bishops, shall see it upon the pestilent Papists within the realm of England. This my affirmation proceedeth, not from any conjecture of man's fantasy, but from the ordinary course of God's judgments against manifest contemners of his precepts from the beginning, which is this:

First, to rebuke, and notify by his messengers such sins. as before the world are not known to be sin.

Secondly, to provoke to repentance.

Thirdly, to suffer the reprobate to declare their own impenitency before the world.

And last, to pour upon them so manifest vengeance, that his church may be instructed as well of his power, as of his severe judgments against disobedience. This was the order of his judgment against Pharaoh, against Saul, against Jeroboam, against Herod, against the Scribes and Pharisees, and against the whole city of Jerusalem. (Exod., vii, viii, xiv; 1 Kings, xv; 1 Kings, xiii.)

Our ears have heard, and our eyes have seen, the first three diets of the Lord's judgment executed against the pestilent Papists within the realm of England. For we have heard their summoning and citation duly executed by the messengers of God's word; we have heard them accused and convicted

before their own faces of theft and murder, of blasphemy against God, of idolatry, and finally of all abominations. Which crimes being laid to their charge, in their own presence, they were not able to deny, so potent, so plain, and evident was God's word, whereby their secret botches and old festered sores were discovered and revealed.

We know, that long process of time hath been granted by God's lenity, to their conversion and repentance: and how little the same hath availed, these present days may testify. For who now doth not espy their malice to increase, and their obstinacy to be such, as none can be greater? Shall we then think, that God will give over his cause, as if he were not able to prevail against tyrants? Not so, dear brethren, not so; but even so assuredly as our God liveth, by whose Spirit was stirred up some of his elect, first to espy the great abominations of those tyrants in this our age; which, his messengers, in despite of their tyranny, God preserved, to proclaim and notify before their own faces such sins, as the world knew not to be sin—and as assuredly as we have espied them still to continue in malice against God, against his eternal verity, and against the messengers of the same—so assuredly shall we see God's extreme plagues poured forth upon them even in this corporal life, that some of us may witness to the generation that shall follow, the wondrous works that the Lord hath wrought, and will work in this our age. Neither shall these plagues, more than the word of God which passed before, work in them any true repentance. But still, in a blind rage they shall rebel against the majesty of God; for the deadly venom of that malicious serpent, their father the

devil, can never be purged from their cankered hearts. And therefore, after these plagues, of which, some we have heard and seen—for what a plague was it to the false Bishop of Durham, before his own face to be called murderer and thief, and of the same so to be convicted, that neither could himself deny it, neither any of his proctors or divine doctors being present with him, durst enterprise to speak one word in defence of his cause?—after these plagues, I say, of which some we have seen, and the rest we shortly look for, resteth the last, the unquenchable fire, which is prepared for their portion.

And therefore, yet again, dearly beloved in our Saviour Jesus Christ, hope you against hope, and against all worldly appearance. For so assuredly as God is immutable, so assuredly shall he stir up one Jehu or other, to execute his vengeance upon these blood-thirsty tyrants, and obstinate idolaters. And therefore, abide ye patiently the time that is appointed to our correction, and to the full ripeness of their malicious minds. Be not discouraged, although the bishops have gotten the victory. So did the Benjamites (natural brethren to our bishops,) defenders of whoredom and abominable adultery, twice prevail against the Israelites, who fought at God's commandment. Ye shall consider, beloved brethren, that the counsels of God are profound and inscrutable: the most just man is not innocent in his sight. There may be secret causes, why God sometimes will permit the most wicked, to prevail and triumph in the most unjust action. But yet will He not long delay to execute his wrath, and justly deserved vengeance, upon such as be proud murderers, obstinate idolaters, and impenitent malefactors. And therefore have they



not great cause to rejoice; for albeit they have once prevailed against flesh, yet shall God shortly bring them to confusion and shame for ever. Let Winchester and his cruel council devise and study till his wits fail, how the kingdom of his father, the Antichrist of Rome, may prosper; and let him and them drink the blood of God's saints, till they be drunk, and their bellies burst; yet shall they never prevail long in their attempts. Their counsels and determinations shall be like the dream of a hungry or thirsty man, who in his sleep dreameth that he is eating or drinking, but after he is awakened, his pain continueth, and his soul is impatient, and nothing eased. Even so shall these tyrants, after their profound counsels, long devices, and assured determinations, understand and know that the hope of hypocrites shall be frustrated, that a kingdom begun with tyranny and blood can neither be stable nor permanent, (Job, v.) but that the glory, the riches, and maintainers of the same, shall be as straw in the flame of fire. (Job, xv.) Altogether with a blast they shall be consumed in such sort, that their palaces shall be a heap of stones, their congregations shall be desolate, and such as do depend upon their help, shall fall into destruction and ignominy with them. (Isa., xxii.)

And therefore, beloved brethren in our Saviour Jesus Christ, seeing that neither can our imperfections nor frail weakness hinder Christ Jesus to return to us by the presence of his Word; neither that the tyranny of these blood-thirsty wolves may so devour Christ's small flock, but that a great number shall be preserved to the praise of God's glory; neither that these most cruel tyrants can long escape God's vengeance, let us in comfort lift up our heads, and constantly

look for the Lord's deliverance with heart and voice, saying to our God,

“O Lord, albeit other lords than thou have power over our bodies, yet let us only remember thee, and thy holy name; to whom be praise before the congregation. Amen.”

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by his omnipotent Spirit guide and rule your hearts in his true fear to the end. Amen.

Written at Dieppe, the last of May, An. 1554.

## LETTER TO THE QUEEN REGENT.

TO THE EXCELLENT LADY MARY, DOWAGER, REGENT OF SCOTLAND, HER HUMBLE SUBJECT JOHN KNOX WISHETH GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE, FROM GOD THE FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WITH THE SPIRIT OF PERFECT JUDGMENT.

THE eternal providence of the same God who hath appointed his chosen children to fight in this transitory and wretched life a battle strong and difficult, hath also appointed their final victory by a marvellous fashion, and the manner of their preservation in their battle more marvellous. (Gen., iii.) Their victory standeth not in resisting, but in suffering, (Matt., v,) as our sovereign Master pronounceth to his disciples, that in their patience they should possess their souls. (John, xiv, xvi.) And the same foresaw the prophet Isaiah, when that he painteth forth all other battle to be with violence, tumult, and bloodshedding, but the victory of God's people to be in quietness, silence, and hope, (Isa., ix): meaning that all others that obtain victory do enforce themselves to resist their adversaries, to shed blood, and to murder. But so do not the elect of God; but all things they sustain at the commandment of Him who hath appointed them to suffer, being most assuredly persuaded that then only they triumph, when all men judge them oppressed. For in the cross of Christ always is included a secret and hid victory, never well known, till the sufferer appear altogether to be as it were exterminate. For then only did the blood of Abel cry to God, when proud Cain judged all memory of his bro-

ther to be extinguished. And so, I say, their victory is marvellous. And how that they can be preserved and not brought to utter confusion, the eye of man perceiveth not. But He, whose power is infinite, by secret and hid motions toucheth the hearts of such as to man's judgment have power to destroy them, of very pity and compassion to save his people. (Isa., xl, xli, li.) As that he did the hearts of the Egyptian midwives to preserve the men-children of the Israelites, when precept was given by Pharaoh of their destruction. (Exod., ii.) The heart of Pharaoh's daughter likewise to pity Moses, in his young infancy exposed to the dangers of the waters. The heart of Nebuchadnezzar to preserve the captives alive, and liberally to nourish the children that were found apt to letters, (2 Kings, xxv, Jerem., lii): and, finally, the heart of Cyrus, to set at liberty the people of God, after long bondage and thralldom. (Ezra, i.)

And thus doth the invisible power and love of God manifest itself towards his elect from time to time, for two causes specially. First, to comfort his weak warriors in their manifold temptations, letting them understand, that he is able to compel such as sometimes were enemies to his people, to fight in their cause, and to promote their deliverance; and, secondly, to give a testimony of his favour to them that, by all appearance, did live before, as St. Paul speaketh, without God in the world; as strangers from the commonwealth of Israel, and without the league of his merciful promise, and free grace made to his church. (Ephes., ii.) For who could have affirmed, that any of these persons afore-named had been of that nature and clemency, before occasions were offered unto them? But the works of mercy showed to the

afflicted, have left to us assurance, that God used them as vessels of his honour. For pity and mercy showed to Christ's afflicted flock, as they never lacked reward temporal, so, if they be continued, and be not changed into cruelty, are assured signs and seals of everlasting mercy to be received from God, who by his Holy Spirit moveth their hearts to show mercy to the people of God oppressed and afflicted. Your Grace, perchance, doth wonder, to what purpose these things be recited; and I in very deed cannot wonder enough, that occasion is offered to me, a worm most wretched, to recite the same at this present. For I have looked rather for the sentence of death, than to have written to your Grace in these last and most wicked days, in which Satan so blindeth the hearts of many, that innocents are condemned, their cause never being tried.<sup>1</sup> I doubt not but the rumours which have come to your Grace's ears of me, have been such, that if all reports were true, I were unworthy to live in the earth; and wonder it is, that the voices of the multitude should not have so inflamed your Grace's heart with just hatred of such a one as I am accused to be, that all access to pity should have been shut up. I am traduced as a heretic, accused as a false teacher and seducer of the people, besides other opprobries which (affirmed by men of worldly honour and estimation) may easily kindle the wrath of magistrates, where innocency is not known. But blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the dew of his heavenly grace, hath so quenched the fire of displeasure, as yet, in your Grace's heart, (which of late

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to the summary executions of Protestants at this time, not only throughout the Continent, but also in England, and occasionally in Scotland.

days I have understood,) that Satan is frustrated of his enterprise and purpose. Which is to my heart no small comfort, not so much (God is my witness) for any benefit that I can receive in this miserable life, by protection of any earthly creature—for the cup which it behoveth me to drink, is appointed by the wisdom of Him whose counsels are not changeable—as that I am for that benefit which I am assured your Grace shall receive, if that you continue in like moderation and clemency towards others that most unjustly are, and shall be accused, as that your Grace hath begun towards me, and my most desperate case. That is, if that by godly wisdom you shall study to bridle the fury and rage of them who, for the maintenance of their worldly pomp, regard nothing the murdering of simple innocents, then shall He who doth pronounce mercy to appertain to the merciful, (Matt., v.) and promiseth, that a cup of cold water given for his name's sake, shall not lack reward, (Matt., x.) first cause your happy government to be praised in this present age and posterities to come; and last, recompense your godly pains and study, with that joy and glory which the eye hath not seen, nor yet can enter into the heart of mortal creature. (1 Cor., ii.)

Superfluous and foolish it shall appear to many, that I, a man of base estate and condition, dare enterprise to admonish a Princess so honourable, endued with wisdom and graces singular. But when I consider the honour which God commandeth to be given to magistrates, (Exod., xx; Rom., xiii; 1 Pet., ii,) which no doubt, if it be true honour, containeth in itself in lawful things obedience, and in all things love and reverence:—when further, I consider the trouble-

some estate of Christ's true religion, this day oppressed by blindness of men; and last, the great multitude of flatterers, and the rare number of them that boldly and plainly dare speak the naked verity in presence of their princes, and specially in the cause of Jesus Christ;—these things, I say, considered, whatsoever any man shall judge of my enterprise, I am compelled to say that,

1. Unless in your regiment<sup>1</sup> and using of power, your Grace be found different from the multitude of princes and head rulers, that this pre-eminence wherein you are placed, shall be your dejection to torment and pain everlasting. This proposition is sore; but, alas! it is so true, that if I should conceal and hide it from your Grace, I committed no less treason against you, than if I did see you by imprudency take a cup which I knew to be poisoned or envenomed, and yet, would not admonish you to abstain from drinking of the same.

2. The religion which this day men defend by fire and sword, is a cup envenomed, of which whosoever drinketh (except that by true repentance he after drink of the water of life,) drinketh therewith damnation and death. (John, iv; Rev., xiv, xvii.) How and by whom it hath been envenomed, if it were not more tedious to your Grace to read or hear, than it is painful to me to write or rehearse, I would not spare the labour. But for this present, I have thought it some discharge of one part of my duty, if I of very love admonish your Grace of the danger: which I do, as God one day shall declare, preferring your Grace's salvation, and the salvation of the people now committed to your charge, to any corporal benefit that can redound to myself.

But you think, peradventure, that the care of reli-

<sup>1</sup> Government.

gion is not committed to magistrates, but to the bishops and Estate Ecclesiastical, as they term it. But deceive not yourself; for the negligence of bishops shall no less be required of the hands of magistrates, than shall the oppression of false judges. For they unjustly promote, foster, and maintain the one and the other: the false and corrupt judge, to spoil the goods and to oppress the bodies of the simple; but the proud prelates do kings maintain, to murder the souls for the which the blood of Christ Jesus was shed; and that they do, either by withholding from them the true word of life, or else, by causing teach unto them a pestilent doctrine, such as now is taught in the papistical churches.

I know, that you wonder how that the religion which is universally received, can be so damnable and corrupted. But if your Grace shall consider, that ever from the beginning the multitude hath declined from God, (Gen., vi,) yea, even in the people to whom he spake by his Law and Prophets; (Psalm xiv,) if you shall consider the complaint of the Holy Ghost, complaining that nations, people, princes, and kings of the earth, have raged, made conspiracies, and holden counsels against the Lord, and against his anointed, Christ Jesus, (Psalm ii): further, if you shall consider the question which Jesus himself doth move, in these words, "When the Son of Man shall come, shall he find faith in the earth?" (Luke, xviii,) and last, if your Grace shall consider the manifest contempt of God, and of his holy precepts, which this day reigneth without punishment upon the face of the whole earth: for as Hosea complaineth, "there is no verity, there is no mercy, there is no truth this day among men; but lies, perjury, and oppression overflow all, and blood



toucheth blood," (Hos., iv,) that is, every iniquity is joined to another—if deeply, I say, your Grace shall contemplate the universal corruption that this day reigneth in all estates, then shall your Grace cease to wonder that many are called, and few are chosen; (Matt., xx,) and you shall begin to tremble, and fear to follow the multitude to perdition. (Matt., vii.)

The universal defection whereof St. Paul prophesied (2 Thess., ii,) is easily to be espied, as well in religion, as in manners. The corruption of life is evident, and religion is not judged nor measured by the plain word of God, but by custom, consuetude, will, consent and determinations of men. But shall He who hath pronounced all cogitations of man's heart to be vain at all times, accept the counsels and consents of men, for a religion pleasing and acceptable before him? Let not your Grace be deceived. God cannot lie; God cannot deny himself. He hath witnessed from the beginning, that no religion pleaseth him, except that which He by his own word hath commanded and established. (Deut., iv, xii.) The Verity itself pronounceth this sentence, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the precepts of men," (Matt., xv;) and also, "All plantation which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted out." Before the coming of his well-beloved Son, in the flesh, severely He punished all such as durst enterprise to alter or change his ceremonies and statutes, as in Saul, (1 Sam., xiii; xv,) Uzziah, (2 Chron., xxvi,) Nadab and Abihu, is to be read. (Levit., x.) And will He now, after that he hath opened his counsel to the world by his only Son, whom he commandeth to be heard, (Matt., xvii,) and after that by his Holy Spirit speaking in his apostles, he hath established the religion in

which he will have his true worshippers to abide to the end, (Acts, i, ii, iii; 1 Cor., xi, xxvi,)—will he now, I say, admit men's inventions in the matter of religion, which he reputed for damnable idolatry? (Coloss., ii.) If man and angels would affirm that He will or may do it, his own Verity shall convict them of a lie. For this sentence He pronounceth, "Not that which seemeth good in thy eyes shalt thou do to the Lord thy God; but that which the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, that do thou: add nothing unto it, diminish nothing from it." (Deut., iv, xii.) Which, sealing up his New Testament, He repeateth in these words, "That which ye have, hold till I come again," etc. (Rev., ii.) And therefore, yet again it repenteth me not to say, that in this point, which is chief and principal, your Grace must dissent from the multitude of rulers, or else, you can possess no portion with Christ Jesus in his kingdom and glory.

An orator, and God's messenger also, justly might require of you now (by God's hand promoted to high dignity,) a motherly pity upon your subjects; a justice inflexible to be used against murderers and common oppressors; a heart void of avarice and partiality; a mind studious and careful for maintenance of that realm and commonwealth above which God hath placed you, and by it hath made you honourable; with the rest of virtues, which not only God's Scriptures. but also writers illuminated only with the light of nature, require in godly rulers. But vain it is to crave reformation of manners, where religion is corrupted; for like as a man cannot do the office of a man, till first he have a being and life, so, to work works pleasant in the sight of God the Father, can no man do without the Spirit of the Lord Jesus,

which doth not abide in the hearts of idolaters. And therefore the most godly princes, Josiah, Hezekiah, and Jehosaphat, seeking God's favour to rest upon them and upon their people, before all things began to reform religion. (1 Kings, xv; 2 Chron., xvii; 2 Kings, xxii; 2 Chron., xxxiv; 2 Kings, xviii; 2 Chron., xxix, xxx. xxxi.) For it is as the stomach within the body, which, if it be corrupted, of necessity it infecteth the whole mass. And therefore (often I repeat that which to be done is most necessary,) if your Grace pretend to reign with Christ Jesus, then it behoveth you to take care of his true religion, which this day within your realm is so deformed, that no part of Christ's ordinances remains in their first strength and original purity: which, I praise God, to me is less difficult to prove, than dangerous to speak. And yet, neither the one nor the other I fear, partly, because the love of life eternal quencheth the terror of temporal death, and partly, because I would with St. Paul wish myself accursed from Christ (as touching earthly pleasure,) for the salvation of my brethren, and illumination of your Grace; which thing, work and very deed, and not bare word or writing shall witness and declare, if I may purchase the liberty of tongue but forty days only.

I am not ignorant how dangerous a thing it appeareth to the natural man, to innovate any thing in matters of religion; and partly, I consider your Grace's power is not so free, as a public reformation perchance would require. But if your Grace shall consider the danger and damnation perpetual which inevitably hangeth upon all maintainers of a false religion, then shall the greatest danger easily devour and swallow up the smaller. If your Grace shall

consider, that either you must serve God to life everlasting, or else serve the world to death and damnation, (Matt., vi; Rom., viii; 1 Kings, xviii,) then, albeit that man and angel should dissuade you, you will choose life, and refuse death. And if further, you shall consider, that the very life consisteth in the knowledge of the only true God, and of his Son, Christ Jesus, and that true knowledge hath annexed with it God's true worship and honour, which requireth a testimony of his own will expressed by his word that such honour doth please him; if these things aforesaid your Grace do earnestly meditate, then, albeit you may not do suddenly what you would, yet shall you not cease to do what you may. Your Grace cannot suddenly abolish superstition, and remove from offices unprofitable pastors, of whom speaketh Ezekiel the prophet, (Ezek., xxxiv,) which to a public reformation is requisite and necessary. But if the zeal of God's glory be fervent in your Grace's heart, you will not by wicked laws maintain idolatry; neither will you suffer the fury of bishops to murder and devour the poor members of Christ's body, as in times bypast they have been accustomed: which thing, if either by blind ignorance you do, or yet for pleasure of others within this realm permit to be done, then, except you speedily repent, you and your posterity shall suddenly feel the depressing hand of Him that hath exalted you. You shall be compelled, will you or not, to know that He is eternal against whom you address the battle; and that it is He that moderateth the times and disposeth kingdoms, ejecting from authority such as be inobedient, and placing others according to his good pleasure (Dan., ii): that it is He that glorifieth them that do

glorify him, and poureth forth contempt upon princes that rebel against his graces offered. (2 Sam., ii; Job, xii; Psalm cvii; Dan., ii.)

How dangerous that ever it shall appear to the flesh to obey God, and to make war against the devil, the prince of darkness, pride, and superstition; yet if your Grace look to have yourself and seed to continue in honour worldly and everlasting, subject yourself betimes under the hand of him that is omnipotent: embrace his will, despise not his testament, refuse not his graces offered. When he calleth upon you, withdraw not your ear. Be not led away with the vain opinion that your church cannot err. Be you most assuredly persuaded, that so far as in life you see them degenerate from Christ's true apostles, so, in religion are they further corrupted. Lay the book of God before your eyes, (Josh., i,) and let it be judge to that which I say; which if you with fear and reverence obey, as did Josiah the admonitions of the prophetess, (2 Chron., xxxiv,) then shall He, by whom kings reign, crown your battle with double benediction, and reward you with wisdom, riches, glory, honour, and long life in this your regiment temporal, (2 Chron., i); and with life everlasting, when the King of all kings, (whose members do now cry for your help,) the Lord Jesus, shall appear to judgment, accompanied with his angels; before whom you shall make account of your present regiment, when the proud and disobedient shall cry, "Mountains, fall upon us, and hide us from the face of the Lamb." (Rev., vi, xvi.) But then it shall be too late, because they contemned his voice when he lovingly called.

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the

power of his Holy Spirit, move your heart so to consider and accept the things that be said, that they be not a testimony of your just condemnation in that great day of the Lord Jesus ; to whose omnipotent Spirit I unfeignedly commit your Grace.

## A MOST WHOLESOME COUNSEL

HOW TO BEHAVE OURSELVES IN THE MIDST OF THIS  
WICKED GENERATION, TOUCHING THE DAILY EXER-  
CISE OF GOD'S MOST HOLY AND SACRED WORD.

TO HIS BRETHREN IN SCOTLAND, AFTER HE HAD BEEN QUIET  
AMONG THEM.

**T**HE *comfort of the Holy Ghost for salutation.*—

Not so much to instruct you, as to leave with you, dearly beloved brethren, some testimony of my love, I have thought good to communicate with you in these few lines my weak counsel, how I would ye should behave yourselves in the midst of this wicked generation touching the exercise of God's most holy and sacred word, without the which, neither shall knowledge increase, godliness appear, nor fervency continue among you. For as the word of God is the beginning of life spiritual, without which all flesh is dead in God's presence; and the lanthorn to our feet, without the brightness whereof, all the posterity of Adam doth walk in darkness—and as it is the foundation of faith, without the which, no man understandeth the good will of God—so is it also the only organ and instrument which God useth to strengthen the weak, to comfort the afflicted, to reduce to mercy by repentance such as have slidden; and finally, to preserve and keep the very life of the soul, in all assaults and temptations.

And therefore, if that ye desire your knowledge to be increased, your faith to be confirmed, your consciences to be quieted and comforted, or finally, your

souls to be preserved in life, let your exercise be frequent in the law of your Lord God. Despise not that precept which Moses (who by his own experience had learned what comfort lieth hid within the word of God,) gave to the Israelites, in these words, "These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt exercise thy children in them; thou shalt talk of them, when thou art at home in thy house, and as thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be papers of remembrance between thy eyes; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and upon thy gates." (Deut., vi.) And Moses in another place commands them, to remember the law of the Lord God to do it, that it may be well unto them, and with their children, in the land which the Lord shall give them: meaning, that like as frequent memory and repetition of God's precepts is the means whereby the fear of God, which is the beginning of all wisdom and felicity, is kept recent in mind, so is negligence and oblivion of God's benefits received, the first step of defection from God. Now, if the law, which by reason of our weakness can work nothing but wrath and anger, was so effectual, that remembered and rehearsed of purpose to do it, it brought to the people a corporal benediction, what shall we say that the glorious gospel of Christ Jesus doth work, so that it be with reverence entreated? St. Paul calleth it the sweet odour of life unto those that should receive life; borrowing his similitude from odoriferous herbs or precious unguents, whose nature is, the more they be touched or moved, to send forth their odour more pleasing and delectable. Even such, dear brethren,



is the blessed evangel of our Lord Jesus ; for the more that it be entreated, the more comfortable and more pleasant is it, to such as do hear, read, and exercise the same.

I am not ignorant, that as the Israelites loathed manna, because that every day they saw and ate but one thing, so some there be now-a-days, (who will not be holden of the worst sort,) that after once reading some parcels of the Scriptures, do convert themselves altogether to profane authors and human learning, because that the variety of matters therein contained doth bring with it a daily delectation ; where contrariwise, within the simple Scriptures of God, the perpetual repetition of a thing is harassing and wearisome. This temptation, I confess, may enter into God's very elect, for a time : but impossible it is, that therein they continue to the end ; for God's election, besides other evident signs, hath this ever joined with it, that God's elect are called from ignorance (I speak of those that are come to the years of knowledge,) to some taste and feeling of God's mercy, of which, they are never satisfied in this life, but from time to time they hunger and they thirst to eat the bread that descended from heaven, and to drink the water that springeth unto life everlasting ; which they cannot do, but by means of faith ; and faith looketh ever to the will of God revealed by his word ; so that Faith hath both her beginning and continuance by the word of God. And so, I say, that impossible it is that God's chosen children can despise or reject the word of their salvation, by any long continuance, neither yet loathe it to the end. Often it is, that God's elect are holden in such bondage and thralldom, that they cannot have the bread of life broken unto

them, neither yet liberty to exercise themselves in God's holy word; but then do not God's dear children loathe, but most greedily do they covet the food of their souls. Then do they accuse their former negligence, then lament and bewail they the miserable affliction of their brethren; and then cry and call they in their hearts, (and openly where they dare,) for free passage to the gospel. This hunger and thirst doth argue and prove the life of their souls. But if such men as having liberty to read and exercise themselves on God's holy Scripture, and yet do begin to weary, because from time to time they read but one thing; I ask, why weary they not also every day to drink wine, to eat bread every day, to behold the brightness of the sun, and so to use the rest of God's creatures which every day do keep their own substance, course, and nature? They shall answer, I trust, Because such creatures have a strength, as oft as they are used, to expel hunger, to quench thirst, to restore strength, and to preserve the life. O miserable wretches! who dare attribute more power and strength to the corruptible creatures in nourishing and preserving the mortal carcase, than to the eternal word of God in nourishment of the soul, which is immortal.

To reason with their abominable unthankfulness at this present, is not my purpose. But to you, dear brethren, I write my knowledge, and do speak my conscience, that so necessary as meat and drink are to the preservation of life corporal, and so necessary as the heat and brightness of the sun are to the quickening of the herbs and to expel darkness, so necessary is also to life everlasting, and to the illumination and light of the soul, the perpetual meditation, exercise, and use of God's holy word.

And therefore, dear brethren, if that ye look for a life to come, of necessity it is that ye exercise yourselves in the book of the Lord your God. Let no day slip over without some comfort received from the mouth of God. Open your ears, and He will speak, even pleasing things to your heart. Close not your eyes, but diligently let them behold what portion of substance is left to you within your Father's testament. Let your tongue learn to praise the gracious goodness of Him who of his mere mercy hath called you from darkness to light, and from death to life. Neither yet may you do this so quietly, that ye will admit no witnesses. Nay, brethren, ye are ordained of God to rule and govern your own houses in God's true fear, and according to his holy word—within your own houses, I say, in some cases ye are bishops and kings; your wives, children, and family are your bishopric and charge; of you it shall be required how carefully and diligently ye have instructed them in God's true knowledge; how ye have studied, in them to plant virtue, and to repress vice. And therefore I say, ye must make them partakers in reading, exhortation, and in making common prayers; which I would, in every house were used once a day at least. But above all things, dear brethren, study to practise in life that which the Lord commands, and then be ye assured, that ye shall never hear nor read the same without fruit. And this much for the exercises within your houses.

Considering that St. Paul calls the congregation, the body of Christ, whereof every one of us is a member; teaching us thereby, that no member is of sufficiency to sustain and feed itself, without the help and support of any other, I think it necessary, that

for the conference of Scriptures, assemblies of brethren be had. The order therein to be observed, is expressed by St. Paul, and therefore I need not to use many words in that behalf: only willing, that when ye convene, (which I would were once a week,) that your beginning should be from confessing of your offences, and invocation of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus to assist you in all your godly enterprises; and then, let some place of Scripture be plainly and distinctly read, so much as shall be thought sufficient for a day or time:—which ended, if any brother have exhortation, interpretation, or doubt, let him not fear to speak and move the same, so that he do it with moderation, either to edify, or be edified. And hereof, I doubt not, but great profit shall shortly ensue: for first, by hearing, reading, and comparing the Scriptures, in the assembly, the whole body of the Scriptures of God shall become familiar; the judgments and spirits of men shall be tried, their patience and modesty shall be known, and finally their gifts and utterance shall appear. Multiplication of words, perplexed interpretation, and wilfulness in reasoning, is to be avoided at all times, and in all places, but chiefly in the congregation, where nothing ought to be respected, except the glory of God, and comfort and edification of our brethren. If any thing occur within the text, or yet arise in reasoning, which your judgments cannot resolve, or capacities apprehend, let the same be noted and put in writing, before ye depart the congregation, that when God shall offer unto you any interpreter, your doubts being noted and known, may have the more expedited resolution; or else, that when ye shall have occasion to write to such as with whom ye would communicate your judgments, your letters may signify

and declare your unfeigned desire that ye have of God and of his true knowledge, and they, I doubt not, according to their talents, will endeavour, and bestow their faithful labours, to satisfy your godly petitions. Of myself, I will speak as I think; I will more gladly spend fifteen hours in communicating my judgment with you, in explaining, as God pleases to open to me, any place of Scripture, than half an hour in any other matter beside.

Further, in reading the Scriptures, I would ye should join some books of the Old, and some of the New Testament together; as Genesis and one of the Evangelists, Exodus with another, and so forth, ever ending such books as ye begin (as the time will suffer :) for it shall greatly comfort you, to hear that harmony and well-tuned song of the Holy Spirit speaking in our fathers from the beginning. It shall confirm you in these dangerous and perilous days, to behold the face of Christ Jesus' loving Spouse and Kirk, from Abel to himself, and from himself to this day, in all ages to be one. Be frequent in the Prophets, and in the Epistles of St. Paul; for the multitude of matters most comfortable therein contained, requireth exercise and good memory. Like as your assembly ought to begin with confession and invocation of God's Holy Spirit, so would I that they were never finished without thanksgiving, and common prayers for princes, rulers, and magistrates; for the liberty and free passage of Christ's evangel; for the comfort and deliverance of our afflicted brethren in all places, now persecuted, but most cruelly now, within the realms of France and England; and for such other things, as the Spirit of the Lord Jesus shall teach unto you to be profitable either to your-

selves, or yet to your brethren, wheresoever they be. If thus or better, dear brethren, I shall hear that you exercise yourselves, then will I praise God for your great obedience, as for them that not only have received the word of grace with gladness, but that also, with care do keep the same, as a treasure and jewel most precious. And because that I cannot suspect, that ye will do the contrary at this present, I will use no threatenings; for my good hope is, that ye shall walk as the sons of light, in the midst of this wicked generation; that ye shall be as stars in the night season, who yet are not changed into darkness: that ye shall be as wheat amongst the cockle, and yet, that ye shall not change your nature which ye have received by grace, through the fellowship and participation which we have with the Lord Jesus, in his body and blood. And finally, that ye shall be of the number of the prudent virgins, daily renewing your lamps with oil, as they that patiently abide the glorious appearance and coming of the Lord Jesus: whose omnipotent Spirit rule and instruct, illuminate and comfort your hearts and minds in all assaults, now and ever. Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus rest with you. Remember my weakness in your daily prayers.

Your brother unfeigned,

JOHN KNOX.

THE 7TH OF JULY, 1556.

## EPISTLE

TO HIS BRETHREN IN SCOTLAND.

**G**RACE, *mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, with the perpetual increase of the Holy Spirit.*

Albeit of diverse letters written unto you, dearly beloved brethren, since the month of May last by-past, I have received no answer to this hour, which more I impute to the troubles of these wicked times, than to any negligence and oblivion in you; yet coming to Dieppe, for performance of my promise, and satisfaction of your request, (if God so permit,) I could not but renew somewhat of my former rude writing, the tenor whereof now in effect: That ye, considering, by the signs fore-spoken by our master Christ Jesus, which for the most part are now present, the days of this most corrupt world to be short, and therefore the joyful deliverance of that oppressed and afflicted flock to approach, may walk in God's presence, as becometh his saints and chosen children, having your consciences assuredly grounded upon the free mercy promised to the faithful in Christ Jesus—and also, that your conversation amongst men be such, as it becometh the children of light, having a testimony by your fruits, that your faith is not dead.

And as this is a thing most acceptable before God, so is it not a little necessary in these most wretched and wicked days. For as some, never taking trial of the ground of their faith, have shamefully slidden back, to the great offence of many, openly denying the eter-

nal verity of God, the sweetness and power whereof by all appearance they never tasted, (whatsoever some of them babbled with their tongues,) so hath the dissolute life of such as have professed Christ's holy Evangel, been occasion of two extreme evils. The first is, thereby have the conjured enemies of Christ's truth taken a boldness to blaspheme the same, as a doctrine diabolical, which looseth the bridle to all impiety. For the pestilent Papists perceiving the licentious and inordinate life of some professors, did not only judge the whole number to be likewise infected, but also, did neither fear nor shame to accuse the doctrine, as the principal cause of such enormities. And thus, alas! do we expone the sacred and blessed word of God to opprobrium and rebuke, by our inordinate lives. The second inconvenient which is ensued of our riotous and light behaviour, is no less to be lamented. For thereby, some who began with us to follow God, to profess Christ Jesus, and to abhor superstition, are declined from the sincerity and simplicity which is in Christ Jesus, and have separated themselves from the society and communion of their brethren, into sects damnable and most pernicious; being bold to affirm, that amongst us there is no true kirk, by reason, that our lives do not agree with the word which we profess.

Albeit I am not ignorant, that neither of these two sorts of men shall escape sharp judgments, (except by repentance God speedily call them to better mind and purpose,) yet ought we, dear brethren, take diligent heed, that we be not offensive, neither to Jew, neither to Gentile, as we shall hear, and I hope consider, after that I have touched wherein this last sort of men do err. God is witness, I am not their enemy, neither



do I write of malice towards any person ; but rather, lamenting their blindness, I desire to communicate with them the light which God hath offered and revealed unto me, in Christ Jesus his Son. Of some of them, I trust I may witness, as man may judge of man, that they have a zeal toward godliness ; but alas ! it is not according to knowledge ; for they do stumble at the same stone, which offended the Jews.

But to the purpose—That this sort of men fall from the society of Christ's little flock, with contempt of his sacraments, and holy ordinances by us truly ministered, because some men having knowledge of the truth, do abuse the sweet liberty of the same ; they are abused and deceived in two points : First, they do judge and pronounce of the doctrine and religion, by the lives of the professors ; Secondly, they require a greater purity and justice (denying any true kirk to be, where vices are known,) than ever was found in any congregation since the beginning. Of which two evils, must indeed follow most horrible absurdities. For first, if the life of man, be it good, or be it bad, were either assurance, either yet any just condemnation of any doctrine or religion, then was the ancient idolatry of the Gentiles, and the blasphemous law of Mahomet, to be approved for good religion ; and by the contrary, the holy law and ordinances of God, are to be rejected as false and vain. For in the ancient idolatry, men of most singular virtues, temperance, and external justice, did live, as faithful histories do witness unto us. And this day, amongst the Turks, the common multitude do live a more straight life in many things, than God's word does require ; yea, and some of them, as concerning their external behaviour, may be judged irreprehensible. But what folly were it to prove

and allow therefore their damnable doctrine and false religion? And on the other part what age shall we find from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to David, and from David to Christ, in which iniquity did not abound, yea even in the household of God? Abraham himself, the Father of the Faithful, denied Sarah, his lawful wife, which no doubt was a horrible sin. But was therefore his religion vain? God forbid. The patriarchs moved by envy sold their brother: the Israelites, after deliverance from Egypt, and after they had received the law, fell to idolatry; grudged, murmured, and committed horrible fornication. David was found guilty in adultery and murder; and finally, the Holy Ghost doth witness by the mouth of the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, and of the rest, that the people, under the most godly kings, and when religion was in greatest purity—then, I say, do the prophets witness, that the people were most infected with vices, and so continued till the time of captivity; yea, and after their reduction,<sup>1</sup> their lives did nothing amend, till the days of our Saviour, Christ Jesus. But did this common iniquity of the people prove or argue the religion which was established by God, and was taught amongst them, to be false and vain? Far be such cogitations from the hearts of Christians!

Further, let men consider, if it was lawful for any man, to have despised God's holy ordinances appointed to be used in his assembly, because that wicked men were participant thereof?—yea, or yet, if such as separated themselves apart in sects (as did the Pharisees, Sadducees, and others,) did lack their just punishment. Plain it is, they did not; for they all in process of time declining from the simplicity which

<sup>1</sup> Bringing back.

God had approved by his law and prophets, fell into damnable idolatry and errors: some arrogantly pretending to be saved not only by the works of the law, but also, by such constitutions as they themselves had invented; others, denying the immortality of the soul, the substance of angels or spirits, and the resurrection of the flesh; and others contemning and refusing holy matrimony. Thus, I say, did God revenge the contempt of his holy ordinances upon such as would not humble themselves under the same, but dividing themselves from the society of his congregation, pretended to a greater perfection than the law prescribed.

I would that every man should diligently mark this argument of the apostle. "If he," saith Paul, "who despised the law of Moses, by the testimony of two or three witnesses did suffer death without mercy, with how greater torments, trust you, shall he be punished, who treadeth under foot the Son of God, and esteemeth the blood of his testament as a profane thing?" The Son of God, who is the wisdom of his Father, hath commanded us to assemble together in his name; he hath appointed his holy word to be preached, and his sacraments to be ministered, and to be received of such as profess him to be their Sovereign Lord and Saviour. Which sacraments he hath sanctified to us, not as was the book of the law, with the blood of goats and calves, but with his own precious blood once shed for our redemption, the memorial and remembrance whereof, he hath straitly commanded us (convened together in his name) to celebrate, to his again-coming. These things being weighed, do we think, that such as condemn this his precept, withdrawing themselves from the congrega-

tion, where they cannot deny, but Christ Jesus is preached without all mixture, and sacraments ministered according to his word, shall escape judgment? How the Papists are plagued for the like pride and inobedience, the most part of men do see. And evident it is, that the original of diversities of their religion amongst them invented, had the same end which men now seek, to wit, they would not stand content with the common righteousness promised to the members of Christ's body, by faith in him, but they would aspire and contend for a greater perfection than the common believers could have; and therefore did they divide themselves apart, contemning Christ's flock and ordinances. But to what holiness they are attained, let the world witness. I am sure, God is immutable, and doth no less abhor the sectaries of this age, than he hath done those of the former times. And would God that such as most brag of perfection in these our days, had not given so manifest declaration of their own blindness, as that they have done!

If any think and object, the Kirk, after Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, is of greater purity and perfection, than was the Kirk under the Lord, for it is called the holy and undefiled Spouse of Christ without spot and blemish; and therefore, when vices do reign, and are openly known, that there cannot be the true kirk, let the same man consider, that the holy apostle (yea, the Holy Ghost speaking in him), did salute and acknowledge the congregations of Corinth, Galatia, and Thessalonica, for the true kirks of Christ Jesus, in the which not the less were crimes most grievous—fornication, adultery, incest, strife, debate, contention, and envy—yea, some had declined,

and were bewitched by false apostles; some denied the resurrection, some were idle bellies, and some affirmed circumcision, after Christ, a thing necessary to salvation. True it is, that the apostle sharply reprehended, as well the wicked life, as the erroneous opinions, affirming, that such persons, without repentance, could not enter into the kingdom of God. But in the mean time, he did reverence and acknowledge (as I have said) the same congregations to be the true kirks of Christ Jesus. And therefore I say, that neither the life, neither the opinion of particular persons, is, or can be either sufficient approbation, either yet just condemnation of any doctrine or religion.

The iniquity of man declareth himself to be wicked: but it is not able to deface the religion which God hath approved by his expressed word. For if so were, as before I have touched, then hath no religion been sincere and pure from the beginning; for that age hath never been, in which wicked men did not abound, even in the bowels of the external kirk of Christ Jesus. And therefore I say, that the life and conversation of man is no assured note, sign, or token of Christ's visible kirk. But the substance of that doctrine and religion which is publicly preached, and universally received in any congregation, assembly, or company, doth witness and declare, whether the spirit of the Lord Jesus doth there rule the kirk or not. Wheresoever God's Word hath supreme authority, where Christ Jesus is affirmed, preached, and received to be the only Saviour of the world, where his sacraments are truly ministered, and, finally, where his Word ruleth, and not the vain fantasy of man, there is the true kirk of Christ Jesus, from the society and ordinances whereof, (I mean such as Christ has com-

manded to be used,) ought no man to separate himself, notwithstanding that in the same, the darnel and the cockle appear to surmount the wheat and good seed.

But here do such as will join themselves to no congregation, except with that which is perfect in all things, object to us, but ye have left the assembly of Papists, and have gathered yourselves in companies apart. I answer, Just cause have we, and all men, to fly from the synagogue of Satan, not only because of the wickedness of the lives of such as therein be assembled, but chiefly because that once sovereign captain, Christ Jesus, is therein blasphemed, his sacraments and holy ordinances being altogether polluted and profaned by the vain inventions of men. Let them convict us and our congregations, (as they never shall be able to do,) of these crimes, or else they shall not escape judgment and condemnation, because they do despise Christ Jesus and his holy ordinances.

But now, dear brethren, let us return to ourselves; for albeit that neither Papist, neither the other sort shall escape God's judgment and vengeance, yet it becometh us ever to bear in mind the sentence which our Master by himself, and his Holy Spirit by his apostles, hath pronounced in these words, "Let so your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven. Be ye holy, as I am holy. For I appointed you to go forth, and to produce fruit. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, to whom I leave my own example, that ye love one another. For you I pray, (but for the world I pray not,) that ye may be sanctified in the verity; and the word and doctrine which ye have heard, is the Verity, by which

ye have learned to put off the old man with his lusts and concupiscences, and to put on the new man which is according to the image of Him who hath created you, to walk in justice and cleanness of life. That ye, refusing yourselves, may unfeignedly study to obey the good will of God, which is your sanctification; abstaining from all filthiness and impiety, giving occasion of slander and offence to none, knowing that woe and malediction is provided against such as by whom slander cometh."

By these and the like sentences, dear brethren, it becometh us to consider the excellency of our vocation, and the due and voluntary obedience which we as children, ought to render to so loving and gracious a Father, who of his free grace hath called us from darkness of error, and from bondage of Satan, to the bright knowledge of his glory, and to the glorious liberty of his saints, whose kingdom, and glory, and joy, he hath appointed most assured and triumphant with Christ Jesus, his only beloved. In consideration, I say, of this our glory to come, and of that excellent present dignity which assuredly we possess in hope, (for even now, are we the sons of God, although our glory be hid,) ought we with all diligence watch, lest that oblivion and forgetfulness of our God and of his kingdom creep in our minds; being also careful and vigilant in all assaults, as well to try and examine the infallible signs of our election; which thing St. Peter calleth the making of our election sure; tempting<sup>1</sup> if we stand in faith, and if our conscience do bear record that in vain we have not received the graces of God; as also, that we declare before this wicked generation, by the fruits which we produce, what

<sup>1</sup> Trying.

trees we are ; to wit, the fruitful branches of the very vine.

And in these two points ought our principal and chief study be occupied, considering first, that without faith it is impossible to please God ; and, on the other part, that the eyes of our enemies are ever bent upon us. The Papists are busy to espy our offences, faults, and infirmities, to the end that, as said is, they may blaspheme the blessed Word of the eternal God, by which is uttered and revealed to us his fatherly mercies, godly counsels, and free graces towards us ; which, as they never tasted, so may they not abide to be preached to the world. But as they shall bear their just condemnation, because they accuse us, not hating our sins, but hating our persons, and the Verity we profess, so are they not the enemies most to be feared. For that the venom and malice of Satan reigneth in all Papists for the most part, is now more evident even to infants, than that it can greatly hurt any, except such as willingly, and with appetite insatiable, do drink the poison of that harlot's cup, either for fear of corporal punishment, or else for hope of worldly promotion. But in the other sort, of whom before we have somewhat spoken, the craft and malice of the devil fighting against Christ, is yet more covert, and therefore it is more dangerous, and more to be feared. For under the colour and cloak of mortification of the flesh, of godly life, and of Christian righteousness, they are become privy blasphemers of Christ Jesus, supplanters of his dignity, and manifest enemies to the free justification which cometh by faith in his blood. For some of them do not fear to deny Christ Jesus to be the eternal Son of the eternal God, and so, with Arius, blasphemously denying his Godhead ;



some do affirm, that it is possible that a man may obey, and perfectly fulfil the law of God in this life, in which he may attain to as great perfection of righteousness, as ever Christ had. Others do hold for a sure conclusion, that Christ's righteousness availeth us nothing, except that we have a perpetual righteousness, as they term it, of our own. And, finally, the general consent of all that sect is, that God by his foreknowledge, counsel, and wisdom, hath no assured election, neither yet any certain reprobation; but that every man may elect or reprobate himself by his own free will, which he hath, say they, to do good or evil.

The rest of their opinions, most horrible and absurd, I omit at this present, touching only for your advertisement this, which they think inexpugnable, and in which they glory, as of most precious pearls forged by their own brains, and polished by the fineness of their wits, when yet, in very deed, they are but the rotten heresies of Arius and Pelagius, long ago confuted by Augustine, and by ancient writers before him. And of such teachers or professors, I beseech you, dear brethren, to take heed; for by them is not only the glory of Christ Jesus and his dignity trodden under foot, but also, is God in effect denied to be God. For whosoever go about to remove from God, either yet to call in doubt his wisdom and foreknowledge, his justice, power, mercy, goodness, or free election, go about, so far as in them is, to destroy and call in doubt his holy Godhead. For if there be any thing which he did not cause, the which he did not also predestinate and appoint, then lacked he wisdom, and free regiment. Or if any thing was ever done, or yet after this shall be done in heaven or in earth, which he might not have impeded, if so had

been his godly pleasure, then is he not omnipotent. Which three properties, to wit, Wisdom, Free regiment, and Power, denied to be in God, I pray you, what rests in his Godhead?

But far be such blasphemous and impious cogitations from the hearts of such as hope to reign in the kingdom with Christ Jesus. The wisdom of our God we acknowledge to be such, that it compelleth the very malice of Satan, and the horrible iniquity of such as be drowned in sin, to serve to his glory, and to the profit of his elect. His power we believe and confess to be infinite, and such, as no creature in heaven or earth is able to resist; and his regiment we acknowledge to be so free, that none of his creatures dare present them in judgment, to reason, or demand the question, Why hast thou done this or that? But the fountain of this their damnable error, which is, that in God they can acknowledge no justice, except that which their foolish brain be able to comprehend, at more opportunity, God willing, we shall entreat.<sup>1</sup>

At this present, I thought it my duty, and very love constrained me thereto, to advertise you, that Satan hath sent forth his messengers almost in all quarters, to disperse and sow abroad these his pestilent opinions. And therefore, in the bowels of Christ Jesus I exhort you, to try the spirits of such as shall come unto you. Suffer no man without trial and examination to take upon him the office of a preacher, neither to travel amongst the simple sheep of Christ Jesus, assembling them in private conventions; for if

<sup>1</sup> This promise Knox fulfilled in a work published three years afterwards, entitled "An answer to a great number of blasphemous cavillations written by an Anabaptist, and adversary to God's eternal i'redestination," etc.

every man shall enter at his own appetite into the vineyard of the Lord, without just trial of his life, conversation, doctrine, and condition, as some, more to serve their own bellies, than the Lord Jesus, will offer their labours; so, no doubt, shall Satan have his other supporters, by whom he purposeth to destroy the very plantation of our heavenly Father. And therefore, my prayer is, and shall be unto our God, that in this behalf ye be circumspect, prudent, and wary; for as the matter and business ye have in hand is high, and to the advancement of God's glory, and to no small comfort and consolation of your brethren, if in the same, constantly, with godly wisdom ye proceed, so shall Satan be most vigilant to trouble and impede the same, by all means possible. The powers of the earth shall no doubt withstand you, and the dissolute life and ungodly behaviour, perchance even of some preachers, may slander and offend the weak ones in Christ. But neither of both, (except, as God forbid, you turn back from your godly enterprise,) do I so much fear, as the assault of Satan by false teachers, or dissembled brethren. For seldom it is that open tyranny doth utterly suppress in any realm or province the true religion earnestly received by a multitude. And albeit the ungodly life of preachers for a time trouble the quietness of some conscience, yet such is the mercy of our God towards his own elect, that by his Holy Spirit he comforteth the simple, and by the power of his blessed word, in the end, he confoundeth the dissembled preacher or professor, (I mean, him that is the mercenary, who seeketh the belly, and not the glory of Christ Jesus;) so that neither the open tyranny, neither yet the cloaked and disguised preacher, can much hurt. But deceivable and false

doctrine is a poison and venom, which under the taste and name of verity, once drunken and received, with great difficulty can afterward be purged, as the Epistle of St. Paul, and the history of all ages entreating the estate and matters of religion, do teach us.

If therefore the doctrine and persuasion of any man tend to the exaltation and advancement of any righteousness or perfection, except of Christ Jesus alone; if any affirm, that Christian righteousness which is available before God, be any other perfection, than remission of our sins, which we have by faith only in Christ's blood; or if any promise such perfection in this life, that unfeignedly we need not to say, "Remit to us our offences, for we are unprofitable servants" — and finally, if any persuade, that our merits, good works, or obedience, be any cause either of our justification, or yet of our election, let him be accursed, suppose that he were an angel from heaven; for he preacheth to us another Evangel than the Son of God hath revealed to the world, and the Holy Ghost hath sent up to us by the mouths and writings of the apostles, which plainly affirmeth, that there is no other name given to men under the heaven, in which they may be saved, except in the name, that is, in the power and virtues of Jesus crucified, who is made to us from God, righteousness, wisdom, sanctification, and redemption: by whom alone we have access to the throne of God's mercy, as by one only propitiator and obtainer of grace, to us that of nature be sinful; the flesh (even after our regeneration) ever rebelling against the spirit, during the travail of this life in such sort, that with the apostle Paul, the rest of God's children are compelled to confess, that in them, that is, in their flesh, there remaineth no good.

And therefore shame they not to confess, and that openly and from the heart, that not of the works of righteousness which they have done, but of His mere mercy and grace, who loving us when we were enemies, did give to the death of the cross his only Son for us, are we saved. And further, they acknowledge, that this salvation doth not proceed of our works, neither yet, that it was appointed to us in time; but that before the foundation of the world was laid, did God elect us in Christ Jesus, that we should be holy and blameless before him, by love, by the which he loved us, even when we were dead in sin; and did predestinate us, and freely choose us to be his inheritors with Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will. So that we are his creation, created in Christ Jesus to good works which God hath prepared, that we should walk in them; so that through grace, and that by free and undeserved favour, are we saved by faith; neither of ourselves, neither yet of our works, (lest that any should glory;) but all the children of God do acknowledge and confess, that salvation and the life everlasting, are the gift of God the Father, freely given with Christ his Son—as the twenty-four elders casting their crowns before him that sitteth upon the throne, with one voice do cry, giving glory and praise to him in these words, “Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive glory, honour, and empire; for thou wast killed, and hast redeemed us, and hast made us to our God, priests and kings.”

This doctrine, I say, hath the Holy Ghost sealed up unto us, which Satan from the beginning hath impugned. But now, in these last days, most cruelly doth he rage, omitting no occasion by the which he is able to deface the same, so that what he cannot do

by open tyranny, that he travaileth to bring to pass by false doctrine and errors damnable; that is, Satan continually laboureth to intermeddle, and mix somewhat proceeding from us, besides Christ Jesus and his righteousness, in the cause and matter of our redemption and salvation. For nothing to him is more despitiful, than Christ Jesus exalted, truly preached, and constantly affirmed to be the only Saviour of the world. For that word of verity being the power of God, to the salvation of all those that believe, it is the plain subversion of his kingdom. And therefore he, our mortal enemy, the old Serpent, perceiving his head to be bruised by the power of Christ Jesus, so preached, that He alone may be known conqueror, doth now spit forth his deadly venom, and fiercely showeth his terrible tail, to the end, that he may trouble for a time the very elect, and utterly blind, envenom, and deceive those, whose names are not written in the book of life. But my hope is good of you, dearly beloved in the Lord Jesus, that even to the end, ye shall continue in that doctrine which once ye have professed, notwithstanding that the words of unstable and deceivable opinions be blown in your ears; and also, that ye shall proceed, and march forward in the battle begun. Remember, I beseech you, with what conditions we did first break bread together in the name of the Lord Jesus,<sup>1</sup> whatsoever impediments be prepared in your contrary; that so

<sup>1</sup> During Knox's visit to Scotland, he administered the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Dun, about the beginning of the year 1558; on which occasion, most of the gentlemen of the Mearns professed their adherence to the Reformation, by sitting down at the Lord's table, and entering into a solemn bond, by which they renounced the Popish communion, and pledged themselves to further the preaching of the Gospel, as God should give them preachers and opportunity.

doing, at the last ye may attain to the participation of that kingdom, the possession whereof is not gotten, but by the suffering of many tribulations.

The mighty power, illumination, and grace of the same Spirit who raised from death the Lord Jesus, the great Bishop of our souls, move, illuminate, and inspire your hearts, senses, and understandings, that clearly you may behold the length and breadth, the height and deepness of that love of God our Father, showed and affirmed to us in Jesus Christ; and so lighten the eyes of your inward man, that continually ye may contemplate the unspeakable riches of the glorious inheritance prepared for such as believe and profess him in the presence of men, and of this wicked generation; that ye, in deep consideration of the same, may contemn and despise the deceivable and transitory pleasures that be present, in a sure hope to possess, with the Lord Jesus Christ, those things that be permanent and eternal. Amen.

This letter is more ample, than was that which I sent first; and therefore, notwithstanding the copies of the other, I pray you provide, that the double of this be sent to our brethren in Kyle, and to others that shall require it. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ rest with you. From Dieppe, the first of December, 1557.

Your brother to command in godliness,

JOHN KNOX.

## EPISTLE

TO THE LORDS PROFESSING THE TRUTH IN SCOTLAND.

“ The secrets of the Lord are revealed to those that fear him.”

THE Holy Ghost by the mouth of David and Solomon (right honourable lords,) for two reasons, calleth the fear of the Lord the “beginning of all wisdom.” First, because without the same, all that appeareth to be wisdom, perisheth, and most commonly turneth to the perdition of those that are esteemed, and do esteem themselves most wise. For wisdom natural, not revealed, nor bridled by the fear of God, as it is but extreme foolishness, so is it a poison and venom most deadly, which in the end commonly bringeth the worldly wise to worldly confusion, as the experience of all ages hath taught us; where by the contrary, the fear of the Lord preserveth his servants in their greatest extremities, even before the world.

But this is not the chief cause why the fear of the Lord hath the fore-named title. For evident it is, that not only the worldly wise once suffer death and come to confusion, but also, as David does witness, even those that altogether be fools, and enraged with madness; yea, it is statute to all men once to die. But because that where the fear of the Lord is once deeply grafted in the heart, that there also are the graces of the Holy Spirit from time to time added, to the further instruction, comfort, and confirmation of God’s chosen children in all godliness. Therefore it is justly and chiefly called the beginning of wisdom, by which man



attaineth to eternal felicity, and so doth escape death and confusion. For this is the conclusion of the Holy Ghost most certain and infallible, that where God of his great mercy and infinite goodness once begins to touch the heart with his true fear, and as it were, to change it from the natural rebellion, to give unfeigned reverence to his holy majesty, that there he will, yea, even against the puissance and rage of the ports of hell, perform the work of our redemption, to the manifestation of his own glory, and to the everlasting joy of those to whom he appointeth his Holy Spirit, school-master and instructor.

And albeit that this his favour and fatherly care be common to all His children, in things pertaining to life everlasting, every one receiving such portion and measure of his grace, as his wisdom knoweth to be expedient for finishing and confirmation of that good work begun; yet, in distributing temporal benedictions, his majesty taketh most especial care upon those, whom he hath determined and appointed to be rulers, comforters, and maintainers of others. To Joseph, he gave not only favour in the eyes of strangers, in time of his bondage, but also, in his young age, he did show unto him most notable visions, to the perfect understanding and knowledge whereof did neither his father neither yet himself fully attain, many days after. To Solomon likewise were superabundantly given riches, honour, and worldly rest, besides the wisdom which he required; and to Daniel, above all mortal men of that age, was given the knowledge and revelation of secret and hid things to come. Which singular privileges (in which, they did far excel their brethren,) did not so much serve for themselves, as for the commodity and profit of others, to whom God made them instruc-

tors, rulers, defenders, and stewards. For the interpretation of dreams and visions given unto Joseph, did more profit the commonwealth of Egypt, than it did serve for his eternal salvation. And the same may be said of those notable prerogatives given to Solomon and Daniel: for by the felicity of the one, was the people of Israel, living in his age, reputed blessed; and by the revelation granted to the other, is the holy kirk of God this day assured of things by-past, and that are to come. And therefore, I say, that such singular and rare privileges and graces are given to a few, for the comfort, instruction, and defence of many.

But one thing is to be here marked, and diligently to be observed, which is this: that before all these super-excellent graces, we plainly may perceive, that the fear of God was planted in their hearts. For in Joseph, we may espy a hatred of sin and iniquity, which his brethren committed, in so far, as he reveals the same to his and their father, whose authority he judged sufficient to have repressed the same. In Solomon, we see a desire of wisdom, whereby he might rule and govern with equity and justice the people committed to his charge; and in Daniel, doth evidently appear, the horror and fear that he had to pollute and defile himself with meats forbidden by the law of the Lord his God. And this I say, that the fear of the Lord is the beginning and continuance of wisdom—of wisdom, I say, which is worthy the name of wisdom; and is the most singular gift of God, given to those by whom he purposeth to work any notable work to his glory.

But further must I admonish, that I mean not, that those only who have these singular privileges or revelations of secret things given unto them, immediately

given of God, have in their hearts his true fear; and that no other besides, hath any notion thereof. But I mean also, that they whose hearts God does so mollify and move, that with reverence they receive the counsel and admonitions given unto them by God's messengers; and do determine with themselves to obey his holy will revealed unto them, albeit the same appear far to pass their power or ingine—these men, I say, how ignorant that ever they appear to be of God, cannot be judged altogether empty, and void of his true fear; neither shall they be destitute of wisdom and power, to perform these things which God requireth of them. For in so far as Pharaoh did fear the things that were not seen, and at the counsel and commandment of Joseph, did make provision for the danger which the natural man could neither have believed nor feared; in so doing, I say, he did declare himself much to esteem the messenger of God, by whose spirit, power, and providence, were such things not only revealed, but also, should be performed and brought to pass. Which things indeed; to reverence God's messengers, heartily to embrace, and study to obey the precepts and charges which they give; to study also to magnify God, and to make his providence and wondrous works known unto men, can no man do from an unfeigned heart, except that some spark of God's true fear rest in the same.

The like is to be noted in Nebuchadnezzar, who being the golden head, and only monarch in the earth in his days, ashamed not to stoop, and to fall down (hearing the interpretation of his own dreams,) before the feet of Daniel, and openly to confess, that there was no God who ruleth the heaven and the earth, except the God of Israel. And moreover, he did not

only promote Daniel, being a stranger, captive, and prisoner, above all the princes of his realm, but also, at his request, the king promoted to honours and offices his fellows, and was beneficial to the rest of the Jews there afflicted in his dominions—which confession, obedience, love, and liberality, did no doubt spring from the secret and hid fear of God which was planted in his heart, and no doubt had some root in the same, when he appeared ignorant of God, and greatest enemy to his people.

What further graces and commodities (not only to themselves, but also to many others,) did ensue on this their obedience, the Holy Ghost doth not conceal. For by the one, to wit, by Pharaoh, was not only his own people fed, and preserved in the days of famine, but also, by that godly provision made in his realm, were the lives of many others preserved, yea, the lives of the whole kirk of God, which that day was known to be upon the earth; I mean, of Jacob and his household. And albeit that Nebuchadnezzar did fall, and in many things offend most horribly, yet still we find, that the mercy of God did so overcome his malice, that after long punishment, and dejection from all honours, he was restored again not only to the former reason and understanding of man, of the which he was deprived for a time, but also, to his former dignity, honours, and empire, to the great manifestation of God's glory, and to the most singular erudition, admonition, and comfort to others. For what erudition and doctrine was preached to the world by the publication of his confession, and of the most wondrous work of God declared upon him, which he did notify to many realms and nations which were drowned in idolatry, and did live without

any perfect knowledge of the living God! What admonition might, and this day may, and should earthly rulers and princes receive, by his punishment! And what singular comfort is left to penitent sinners, in his most notable restitution to honours again! The matter, I say, cannot be expressed by the wit or ingine of man. And therefore, yet again I say, that wheresoever the true fear of God is planted in the heart, that there shall also after be added wisdom, and other graces necessary and profitable not only to the receiver, but also to others.

But this root of virtue and wisdom (the true fear of God, I mean,) being absent from the heart, as there can be no obedience which is acceptable unto God, neither yet any love to his messengers, of any long continuance, so can there be no wisdom to search and seek for things profitable, neither yet grace to follow God's will, how manifestly that ever it be revealed. But either are the wholesome counsels and admonitions given for reformation of manifest iniquity, and also for temporal commodities, and conservation of realms and commonwealths, not marked, nor perfectly understood; or else, when God's messengers do plainly speak to princes and rulers, their counsels and admonitions are disdainfully condemned. The counsel, no doubt, of Moses to proud Pharaoh, had been to the salvation of himself, and to the safeguard of his people, if after many plagues, he could have given obedience. But as the sun did long shine before the blind, so in the end, without all light and wisdom, was he and his army in their cruel rage drowned by the waters of the Red sea. The admonition and counsel of Jeremiah to King Zedekiah (although it appeared sharp; for he commanded him,

to render and subject himself into the power of the king who besieged him;) yet had it not been a little profitable to him and to that commonwealth, if he had obeyed and followed the commandment of the prophet. But because the king and his counsel, in the end, agreed to follow their own imaginations, and so, to rebel against God, and his messenger Jeremiah; the one and the other, I mean, the king and his counsellors, did taste the bitter cup of God's vengeance which so oft was pronounced by the mouth of the same prophet. For the eyes of Zedekiah were compelled to behold his counsellors, yea, and his own sons slain in his presence; and immediately were his own eyes put out, so that he never saw light nor comfort in earth: Jerusalem was burnt with fire, and the whole land was laid waste; and all this calamity came upon them, because the counsel of God proclaimed by his prophets, was mocked and contemned. And yet, in this most miserable and universal visitation, mercy was shown to such as feared God, and had been obedient, and shown mercy to his prophet. For besides the multitude which at the commandment of Jeremiah did subject themselves to the king of Babylon, and so were saved from that present vengeance, Abedmelech, the blackmoor or Ethiopian, by whose intercession and bold request unto the king, the prophet was delivered from death and prison; and Baruch the scribe, by whom were written and presented to the princes and counsellors the sermons and preachings of Jeremiah—these two, I say, in the midst of that same time with God's vengeance which consumed many thousands, found favour and grace, and did obtain their lives for a prey.

These things I briefly touch, Right Honourable,

not so much to instruct you, as to animate and to encourage you in that most godly work which once ye have purposed. Ye were of mind (and my good hope is, that so ye yet remain,) to jeopard and hazard in the cause of Christ Jesus, and for the deliverance of your brethren from this Babylonical and anti-christian bondage, your lives, your honours, and whatsoever ye have received in temporal things of God's hands. This matter ye have communicated with me; and I, as I must answer in the presence of the Lord Jesus, have given unto you such counsel, as his Holy Spirit assured me, is for the manifestation of God's glory, and also to your eternal comfort, whatsoever flesh and blood do judge in the matter; as in my former letters more fully is expressed.

But this your former purpose, and my counsel also notwithstanding, if the true fear of God have not some root in your hearts, all is vain, and labour lost. For of this one thing I will that assuredly ye persuade yourselves, that the floods shall come, the winds shall blow, the storms and tempests shall arise, and with violent rage they altogether shall assault your fortress; and then, except ye be builded upon the sure rock, Christ Jesus, who hath commanded you to forsake yourselves, and to follow him, impossible it is that ye can remain constant in your godly purpose, but in a moment shall your whole building and house be overthrown. For flesh and blood cannot deny itself, neither yet can it be made able to endure and abide the fire of afflictions, except that it be convicted of its own infirmity, and therefore, be strengthened and confirmed by the power of another. For this order does God most commonly keep, in appointing and sending to battle his best and most approved

soldiers; first, to deject them from all confidence which they may have, either in themselves, either yet in the arm of any man; and thereafter, to erect and raise them up in boldness of his strength; and by the free promises of his mercy, somewhat does God remeedy the trouble of their conscience.

And this dejection, humiliation, and refusal of themselves, he worketh both in conscience, and confidence of worldly power. He abaseth and beateth down the conscience, opening the eyes of their minds, that they may behold the miseries of their own nature, and their just condemnation which their sins deserve; in deep contemplation whereof, God bringeth them, as it were, to the ports of hell, to an unfeigned hatred of themselves and of sin. And this is the first entrance to the true fear of God. But in this estate He leaveth them not; but manifesting to them his undeserved love and favour in Christ Jesus, his only Son, he retaineth, and somewhat raiseth up their conscience, so that in all assaults, they rest upon his free mercy. Thus did He beat down the pride of Peter, and the confidence which he had in his own strength; and the glory also which Paul had in the righteousness of the law. And yet was the one appointed preacher to the Jews, and the other, chief apostle to the Gentiles. And such as it pleaseth God to appoint to deliver his people oppressed by worldly calamities, he commonly doth so entreat for a long season, to the end, that they have no cause to glory in any thing appertaining to the flesh. For albeit Moses in his youth was nourished in Pharaoh's house, yet before he was known to be the appointed messenger of God, for the deliverance of Israel afflicted, he was forty years banished, yea, and



ashamed not to keep the sheep of his father-in-law. The low and simple estate of Gideon, the contemned youth and infancy of David, are not concealed by the Holy Ghost; to instruct us, first, that the eye of God in appointing of his messengers, looketh not to such things as the world most esteemeth; and secondly, to beat down the arrogancy and pride of all flesh, that no man glory of such works, as God does work by him whom he hath chosen from the dunghill (as David speaketh,) and placed him with the princes of his people, without all merit or deserving of themselves, either yet of any of their progenitors. The same I might prove by more examples; but these histories I may not apply, lest that I be compelled to exceed the measure of a missive. Those that thus be taught of God, and by plain and clear sight of their infirmity and wretched nature are unfeignedly moved to rest upon the power of God, and upon his free and undeserved mercy, have from time to time, augmentation and increase of his Holy Spirit and wisdom in abundance, joined with constancy ministered unto them in the midst of all afflictions, to perform the good work which in God's name they begin. And so potently does he sometimes work, even by such as have sometimes appeared abject and of no estimation, that by one he comforteth, maintaineth, and delivereth many thousands.

If ye have tasted of his Spirit, Right Honourable, and by the motion of the same put your hands to the Lord's work, then, whatsoever any creature imagine in your contrary, yet shall ye so prosper, that in the end, ye shall be called the blessed of the Lord. For as such as labour to suppress God's glory, shall leave their names in execration to the posterity following,

so shall those that unfeignedly seek to promote the same, have their names written not only in the book of life, but also, shall have them here kept, and registered in special recommendation. But in all things, I wish your eyes to be single, beholding only in your enterprise the glory of God, your duty, and the salvation of your brethren.

But now, no further to trouble you at this present, I will only advertise you of such bruit, as I hear in your parts uncertainly noised; which is this, that contradiction and rebellion are made to the authority, by some in that realm. In which point, my conscience will not suffer me to keep back from you my counsel, yea, my judgment and commandment, which I communicate with you in God's fear, and by the assurance of his truth; which is, that none of you that seek to promote the glory of Christ, do suddenly disobey, or displease the established authority in things lawful; neither yet, that ye assist or fortify such, as for their own particular cause and worldly promotion, would trouble the same. But in the bowels of Christ Jesus I exhort you, that with all simplicity and lawful obedience, joined with boldness in God, and with open confession of your faith, ye seek the favour of the authority, that by it (if possible be,) the cause in which ye labour may be promoted. or at the least, not persecuted. Which thing, after all humble request if ye cannot obtain, then, with open and solemn protestation of your obedience to be given to the authority in all things not plainly repugning to God, ye lawfully may attempt the extremity; which is, to provide, whether the authority will consent or not, that Christ's Evangel may be truly preached, and his holy sacraments rightly ministered to you and to your

brethren, the subjects of that realm. And further, ye lawfully may, yea, and thereto are bound, to defend your brethren from persecution and tyranny, be it against princes or emperors, to the uttermost of your power; providing always, as I have said, that neither yourselves deny lawful obedience, neither yet, that ye assist nor promote those that seek authority and pre-eminence of worldly glory, yea, of the oppression and destruction of others. I mean of him, who in the beginning of his authority and government, began to profess Christ's truth; but suddenly sliding back, became a cruel persecutor of Christ's members, a manifest and open oppressor of all true subjects, and a maintainer of all mischievous men; in which horrible vices he, and his faction and assisters, I mean, his nearest kinsmen and chiefest council, to this day do continue, and making according to their power; which God, of his just judgment, shall shortly suppress. For not only the blood of those constant martyrs of Christ Jesus, Mr. George Wishart, simple Adam Wallace, and of others who did suffer for Christ's cause only, but also the blood of those, who under the title of civil crimes was most unjustly shed, shall cry in the ears of the Lord of Hosts, till a just and open vengeance be poured forth upon all those that sought the same; but chiefly upon him that then was in authority,<sup>1</sup> except that unfeigned and speedy repentance prevent God's judgments. I shall be judged sharp; but be ye admonished to flee all con-

<sup>1</sup> The Earl of Arran, formerly Regent of Scotland, after embracing the principles of the Reformation, relapsed into Popery, and countenanced the persecutions of Cardinal Beaton. Afterwards, he alternately favoured and opposed the Reformation, just as it suited his own personal interests, and the aggrandisement of the house of Hamilton, of which he was the head.

federacy with that generation ; for I speak and write in the presence of Him before whose eyes the blood of his saints is so precious, that no worldly power was ever found able to maintain long, or defend such, as delighted in the shedding of the same. And therefore, unto such time as ye see some signs of repentance in them, I say yet again, avoid over great familiarity with them.

That now I persuade you to give lawful obedience to the authority, is nothing repugnant to that which I wrote before touching the war begun; for a great difference there is betwixt lawful obedience, and a fearful flattering of princes, or an unjust accomplishment of their desires in things which be required or devised for the destruction of a commonwealth. But this article I omit for this present. The mighty Spirit of the Lord Jesus rule your hearts in the true fear of God, open your eyes to consider your duties, and give you strength to execute the same.—Amen.

Yours to command in godliness,

JOHN KNOX.

FROM DIEPPE, THE 17TH DECEMBER, 1557.

## ADDRESS

## TO THE COMMONALTY OF SCOTLAND.

TO HIS BELOVED BRETHREN THE COMMONALTY OF SCOTLAND,  
JOHN KNOX WISHETH GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE, WITH THE  
SPIRIT OF RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT.

**W**HAT I have required of the Queen-Regent, estates, and nobility, as the chief heads (for this present) of the realm, I cannot cease to require of you, dearly beloved brethren, who are the commonalty and body of the same: to wit, that notwithstanding that false and cruel sentence which your disguised bishops have pronounced against me, it would please you to be so favourable unto me, as to be indifferent auditors of my just purgation. Which to do, if God earnestly move your hearts, as I nothing doubt but that your enterprise shall redound to the praise of his holy name, so am I assured that ye and your posterity shall by that means receive most singular comfort, edification, and profit. For when ye shall hear the matter debated, ye shall easily perceive and understand, upon what ground and foundation is built that religion, which amongst you is this day defended by fire and sword. As for my own conscience, I am most assuredly persuaded, that whatsoever is used in the papistical church, is altogether repugning to Christ's blessed ordinance, and is nothing but mortal venom, of which whosoever drinketh, I am assuredly persuaded, that therewith he drinketh death and damnation, except by true conversion unto God he be purged from the same.

But because that long silence of God's word hath begotten ignorance almost in all sorts of men, and ignorance joined with long custom hath confirmed superstition in the hearts of many, I therefore, in the name of the Lord Jesus desire audience, as well of you, the commonalty, my brethren, as of the estates and nobility of the realm, that in public preaching I may have place amongst you at large, to utter my mind in all matters of controversy this day in religion. And further, I desire, that ye, concurring with your nobility, would compel your bishops and clergy to cease their tyranny; and also, that for the better assurance and instruction of your conscience, ye would compel your said bishops and false teachers to answer by the scriptures of God, to such objections and crimes as shall be laid against their vain religion, false doctrine, wicked life, and slanderous conversation.

Here I know that it shall be objected, that I require of you a thing most unreasonable; to wit, that ye should call your religion in doubt, which hath been approved and established by so long continuance, and by the consent of so many men before you. But I shortly answer, that neither is the long process of time, neither yet the multitude of men, a sufficient approbation which God will allow for our religion. For as some of the most ancient writers do witness, neither can long process of time justify an error, neither can the multitude of such as follow it change the nature of the same. But if it was an error in the beginning, so is it in the end; and the longer that it be followed, and the more that do receive it, it is the more pestilent, and more to be avoided. For if antiquity or multitude of men could justify any religion, then was the idolatry of the Gentiles, and now

is the abomination of the Turks, good religion; for antiquity approved the one, and a multitude hath received, and doth defend the other.

But otherwise to answer: godly men may wonder from what fountain such a sentence doth flow, That no man ought to try his faith and religion by God's word, but that he safely may believe and follow every thing which antiquity and a multitude have approved. The Spirit of God doth otherwise teach us; for the Wisdom of God, Christ Jesus himself, remitted his adversaries to Moses and the Scriptures, to try by them, whether his doctrine was of God or not. (John. v, vii.) The apostles Paul and Peter command men to try the religion which they profess by God's plain scriptures, and do praise men for so doing. (Acts, xvii, 2 Pet., i.) St. John straitly commandeth, that we believe not every spirit, but willeth us to try the spirits, whether they be of God or not. (1 John, iv.) Now, seeing that these evident testimonies of the Holy Ghost will us to try our faith and religion by the plain word of God, wonder it is, that the Papists will not be content, that their religion and doctrine come under the trial of the same. If this sentence of Christ be true (as it is most true, seeing it springeth from the Verity itself,) "Whoso evil doeth, hateth the light, neither will he come to the light, lest that his evil works be manifested and rebuked," (John, iii,) then do our Papists, by their own sentence, condemn themselves and their religion. For in so far as they refuse examination and trial, they declare, that they know some fault which the light will utter: which is a cause of their fear, and why they claim to that privilege, that no man dispute of their religion. The verity and truth being of the nature of fine purified

gold, doth not fear the trial of the furnace ; but the stubble and chaff of man's inventions (such is their religion) may not abide the flame of the fire.

True it is, that Mahomet pronounced this sentence, that no man should on pain of death dispute or reason of the ground of his religion ; which law to this day, by the art of Satan, is yet observed amongst the Turks, to their mortal blindness, and horrible blaspheming of Christ Jesus and of his true religion. And from Mahomet (or rather from Satan, the father of all lies,) hath the Pope and his rabble learned this former lesson, to wit, that their religion should not be disputed upon ; but what the fathers have believed, that ought and must the children approve. And in so devising, Satan lacked not his foresight. For no one thing hath more established the kingdom of that Roman Antichrist, than this most wicked decree, to wit, that no man was permitted to reason of his power, or to call his laws in doubt. This thing is most assured, that whensoever the papistical religion shall come to examination, it shall be found to have no other ground, than hath the religion of Mahomet ; to wit, man's invention, device, and dreams, overshadowed with some colour of God's word. And therefore, brethren, seeing that the religion is as the stomach to the body, which if it be corrupted, doth infect the whole members, it is necessary that the same be examined, and if it be found replenished with pestilent humours (I mean, with the fantasies of men,) then of necessity it is, that those be purged, else shall your bodies and souls perish for ever. For of this I would ye were most certainly persuaded, that a corrupt religion defileth the whole life of man, appear it never so holy.



Neither would I, that ye should esteem the reformation and care of religion less to appertain to you, because ye are no kings, rulers, judges, nobles, nor in authority. Beloved brethren, ye are God's creatures, created and formed to his own image and similitude; for whose redemption was shed the most precious blood of the only beloved Son of God; to whom he hath commanded his gospel and glad tidings to be preached; and for whom he hath prepared the heavenly inheritance, so that ye will not obstinately refuse, and disdainfully condemn the means which he hath appointed, to obtain the same; to wit, his blessed Evangel, which now he offereth unto you, to the end that ye may be saved. For the gospel and glad tidings of the kingdom truly preached, is the power of God, to the salvation of every believer; (Rom., i;) which to credit and receive, you of the commonalty are no less addebted, than be your rulers and princes. For albeit God hath put and ordained distinction and difference betwixt the king and subjects, betwixt the rulers and the common people, in the regiment and administration of civil policies, yet in the hope of the life to come, he hath made all equal. For as in Christ Jesus, the Jew hath no greater prerogative than hath the Gentile, (Gal., iii,) the man, than hath the woman, the learned than the unlearned, the lord than the servant, but all are one in him, so is there but one way and means to attain to the participation of his benefits and spiritual graces, which is a lively faith working by charity. And therefore I say, that it doth no less appertain to you, beloved brethren, to be grounded and established upon the true and undoubted word of God, than to your princes or rulers. For as your bodies cannot escape corporal

death, if with your princes ye eat or drink deadly poison, (although it be by ignorance or negligence,) so shall ye not escape the death everlasting, if with them ye profess a corrupt religion. Yea, except in heart ye believe, and with the mouth ye confess the Lord Jesus to be the only Saviour of the world, (which ye cannot do, except ye embrace his Evangel offered,) ye cannot escape death and damnation. (Habak., ii ; Mark, xvi.) For as the just liveth by his own faith, so doth the unfaithful perish by his infidelity. (John, iii.) And as true faith is engendered, nourished, and maintained in the hearts of God's elect, by Christ's Evangel truly preached, so is infidelity and unbelief fostered, by concealing and repressing the same. And thus, if ye look for the life everlasting, ye must try if ye stand in faith ; and if ye would be assured of a true and lively faith, ye must needs have Christ Jesus truly preached unto you. And this is the cause, dear brethren, that so oft I repeat, and so constantly I affirm, that to you it doth no less appertain than to your king or princes, to provide that Jesus Christ be truly preached amongst you, seeing that without his true knowledge, can neither of you both attain to salvation. And this is the point wherein I say, all men are equal ; that as all be descended from Adam, by whose sin and inobedience did death enter into the world, so it behoved all that shall obtain life, to be ingrafted in one, that is, in the Lord Jesus, who being the just servant, doth by his knowledge justify many, to wit, all that unfeignedly believe in him. (Isa., liii ; John, iii, v.)

Of this equality, and that God requireth no less of the subject be he never so poor, than of the prince and rich man, in matters of religion, he hath given an evi-

dent declaration in the law of Moses. For when the tabernacle was builded, erected, and set in order. God did provide how it, and the things appertaining to the same, should be sustained, so that they should not fall into decay. And this provision (albeit heaven and earth obey his empire,) would He not take from the secret and hid treasures which lie dispersed in the veins of the earth; neither yet would he take it from the rich and potent of his people. But he did command, that every man of the sons of Israel (were he rich, or were he poor,) that came in count from twenty years and upwards, should yearly pay half a shekel, for an oblation to the Lord, in the remembrance of their redemption, and for an expiation or cleansing to their souls; which money, God commanded should be bestowed upon the ornaments and necessities of the tabernacle of testimony. (Exod., xxx.) He furthermore added a precept, that the rich should give no more for that use, and in that behalf, than should the poor; neither yet that the poor should give any less than should the rich, in that consideration.

This law, to man's reason and judgment may appear very unreasonable: for some rich man might have given a thousand shekels, with less hurt of his substance, than some poor man might have paid the half shekel. And yet, God maketh all equal, and wills that the one should pay no more than the other, neither yet the poor any less than the rich. This law, I say, may appear very unequal. But if the cause which God addeth be observed, we shall find in the same, the great mercy and inestimable wisdom of God to appear, which cause is expressed in these words: "This money received from the children of Israel, thou shalt give in the service of the tabernacle, that it may

be to the children of Israel for a remembrance before the Lord, that he may be merciful to your souls." (Exod., xxx.)

This cause, I say, doth evidently declare, that as the whole multitude was delivered from the bondage of Egypt by the mighty power of God alone, so was every member of the same, without respect of person, sanctified by his grace, the rich in that behalf nothing preferred to the poorest. For by no merit nor worthiness of man was He moved, to choose and to establish his habitation and dwelling amongst them: but their felicity, prerogative and honour, which they had above all other nations, proceeded only from the fountain of his eternal goodness, who loved them freely, as that he freely had chosen them to be his priestly kingdom, and holy people, from all nations of the earth. (Exod., xix.) Thus to honour them, that He would dwell in the midst of them, he neither was moved, I say, by the wisdom of the wise, by the riches of the potent, neither yet by the virtue and holiness of any estate amongst them; but of mere goodness did he love them, and with his presence did he honour that holy people. And therefore, to paint out the same his common love to the whole multitude, and to cut off occasions of contention, and doubts of conscience, he would receive no more from the rich than from the poor, for the maintenance of that his tabernacle, by the which was represented his presence and habitation amongst them. If the rich had been preferred to the poor, then, as the one should have been puffed up with pride, as that he had been more acceptable to God, by reason of his greater gift, so should the conscience of the other have been troubled and wounded, thinking that his poverty was an impediment, that he could not

stand in so perfect favour with God as did the other, because he was not able to give so much as did the rich, to the maintenance of his tabernacle. But He who of mercy (as is said) did choose his habitation amongst them, and also, that best knoweth what lieth within man, did provide the remedy for the one and for the other, making them equal in that behalf, who in other things were most unequal. If the poor should have found himself grieved, by reason of that tax, and that as much was imposed upon him as upon the rich, yet had he no small cause of joy, that God himself would please to compare him, and to make him equal in the maintenance of his tabernacle, to the most rich and potent in Israel.

If this equality was commanded by God for maintenance of that transitory tabernacle, which was but a shadow of a better to come, (Heb., ix,) is not the same required of us, who now have the verity, which is Christ Jesus, who being clad with our nature, is made Immanuel, that is, God with us; whose natural body, although it be received in the heavens, where he must abide till all be complete that is forespoken by the prophets, yet hath he promised to be present with us to the end of the world. (Isa., viii; Acts, iii; Matt., xxviii.) And for that purpose, and for the more assurance of his promise, he hath erected among us here on earth, the signs of his own presence with us, his spiritual tabernacle—the true preaching of his word, and right administration of his sacraments; to the maintenance of which, the subject is no less bound than the prince, the poor than the rich. For as the price which was given for man's redemption is one, so God requireth of all that shall be partakers of the benefits of the same, alike duty, which is a plain con-

fession, that by Christ Jesus alone, we have received whatsoever we have lost in Adam. Of the prince, doth God require, that he refuse himself, and that he follow Christ Jesus; of the subject, he craveth the same. Of kings and judges it is required, that they kiss the Son, that is, give honour, subjection, and obedience to him; and from such reverence, doth not God exempt the subject that shall be saved.

And this is that equality which is betwixt the kings and subjects the most rich and noble, and betwixt the poorest and men of lowest estate; to wit, that as the one is obliged to believe in heart, and with the mouth to confess the Lord Jesus to be the only Saviour of the world, so also is the other. Neither is there any of God's children (who hath attained to the years of discretion,) so poor, but that he hath thus much to bestow upon the ornaments and maintenance of their spiritual tabernacle, when necessity requireth; neither yet is there any so rich of whose hand God requireth any more. For albeit that David gathered great substance for the building of the temple; that Solomon with earnest diligence and incredible expences erected and finished the same; that Hezekiah and Josiah purged the religion which before was corrupted, (1 Chron., xxix; 2 Chron., iii, iv, v, xxix, xxx, xxxv,) yet to them was God no further debtor in that respect, than he was to the most simple of the faithful posterity of faithful Abraham; for their diligence, zeal, and works, gave rather testimony and confession before men what honour they did bear to God, what love to his word, and reverence to his religion, than that any work proceeding from them did either establish, or yet increase God's favour towards them, who freely did love them in Christ his Son,

before the foundation of the world was laid. So that these forenamed, by their notable works, gave testimony of their unfeigned faith; and the same doth the poorest that unfeignedly and openly professeth Christ Jesus; that doth embrace his glad tidings, offered; that doth abhor superstition, and flee from idolatry. The poorest, I say, and most simple, that this day on earth in the days of this cruel persecution firmly believeth in Christ, and boldly doth confess him before this wicked generation, is no less acceptable before God, neither is judged in his presence to have done any less in promoting Christ's cause, than is the king, who by the sword and power which he hath received from God, rooteth out idolatry, and so, advanceth Christ's glory.

But to return to our former purpose: It is no less required, I say, of the subjects to believe in Christ, and to profess his true religion, than of the prince and king. And therefore I affirm, that in God's presence it shall not excuse you to allege, that ye were no chief rulers; and therefore, that the care and reformation of religion did not pertain to you. Ye, dear brethren, as before was said, are the creatures of God, created in his own image and similitude; to whom it is commanded to hear the voice of your heavenly Father, to embrace his Son, Christ Jesus, to flee from all doctrine and religion which he hath not approved by his own will revealed to us in his most blessed word (Matt., xvii.) To which precepts and charges if ye be found inobedient, ye shall perish in your iniquity, as rebels, and stubborn servants that have no pleasure to obey the good-will of their sovereign Lord, who most lovingly doth call for your obedience. And therefore, brethren, in this behalf it is your part to be

careful and diligent; for the question is not of things temporal, which although they be endangered, yet by diligence and process of time may after be redressed; but it is of the damnation of your bodies and souls, and of the loss of the life everlasting, which once lost, can never be recovered. And therefore, I say, that it behoveth you to be careful and diligent in this so weighty a matter, lest that ye, contemning this occasion which God now offereth, find not the like, although that after, with groaning and sobs ye languish for the same.

And that ye be not ignorant of what occasion I mean, in few words I shall express it. Not only I, but with me also diverse other godly and learned men, do offer unto you our labours, faithfully to instruct you in the ways of the Eternal, our God, and in the sincerity of Christ's evangel, which this day, by the pestilent generation of antichrist (I mean by the Pope, and by his most ungodly clergy,) are almost hid from the eyes of men. We offer to jeopard our lives for the salvation of your souls, and by manifest scriptures to prove that religion which amongst you is maintained by fire and sword, to be vain, false, and diabolical. We require nothing of you, but that patiently ye will hear our doctrine, which is not ours, but is the doctrine of salvation, revealed to the world by the only Son of God; and that ye will examine our reasons, by the which we offer to prove the papistical religion to be abominable before God. And last of all, we require, that by your power, the tyranny of these cruel beasts (I mean of the priests and friars,) may be bridled, till we have uttered our minds in all matters this day debateable in religion. If these things in the fear of God you grant to me, and unto



others that unfeignedly for your salvation and for God's glory require the same, I am assured, that ye shall be blessed of God, whatsoever Satan devise against you. But and if ye contemn or refuse God, who thus lovingly offereth unto you salvation and life, ye shall neither escape plagues temporal, which shortly shall apprehend you, neither yet the torment prepared for the devil and for his angels, except by speedy repentance ye return to the Lord, whom you now refuse, if you refuse the messengers of his word

But yet, I think ye doubt, what ye ought and may do in this so weighty a matter. In few words I will declare my conscience in the one and in the other. Ye ought to prefer the glory of God, the promoting of Christ's evangel, and the salvation of your souls, to all things that be in earth. And ye, although ye be but subjects, may lawfully require of your superiors, be it of your king, be it of your lords, rulers, and powers, that they provide for you true preachers, and that they expel such as under the name of pastors devour and destroy the flock, not feeding the same as Christ Jesus hath commanded. And if in this point your superiors be negligent, or yet pretend to maintain tyrants in their tyranny, most justly ye may provide true teachers for yourselves, be it in your cities, towns, or villages; them ye may maintain, and defend against all that shall persecute them, and by that means, shall labour to defraud you of that most comfortable food of your souls, Christ's evangel truly preached. You may, moreover, withhold the fruits and profits which your false bishops and clergymen most unjustly receive of you, until such time as they be compelled faithfully to do their charges and offices; which are, to preach unto you Christ Jesus truly,

rightly to minister his sacraments according to his own institution, and so to watch for the salvation of your souls, as is commanded by Christ Jesus himself, and by his apostles Paul and Peter. (John, xxi; Acts, xx.)

If God shall move your hearts in his true fear to begin to practise these things, and to demand and crave the same of your superiors, which most lawfully ye may do, then I doubt not, but of his great mercy and free grace he shall illuminate the eyes of your minds; that his undoubted Verity shall be a lanthorn to your feet, to guide and lead you in all the ways which his godly wisdom doth approve; he shall make your enemies tremble before your faces; he shall establish his blessed Evangel amongst you, to the salvation and perpetual comfort of yourselves, and of your posterity after you. But and if (as God forbid,) the love of friends, the fear of your princes, and the wisdom of the world, draw you back from God, and from his Son Christ Jesus, be ye certainly persuaded, that ye shall drink the cup of his vengeance—so many, I mean, as shall contemn and despise this loving calling of your heavenly Father. It will not excuse you, dear brethren, in the presence of God, neither yet will it avail you in the day of his visitation, to say, “We were but simple subjects: we could not redress the crimes and faults of our rulers, bishops, and clergy. We called for reformation, and wished for the same; but lords’ brethren were bishops, their sons were abbots, and the friends of great men had the possession of the church; and so, we were compelled to give obedience to all that they demanded.” These vain excuses, I say, will nothing avail you in the presence of God, who requireth no less of the subjects than of

the rulers, that they decline from evil and that they do good; that they abstain from idolatry, superstition, blasphemy, murder, and other such horrible crimes which his law forbiddeth, and yet not the less are openly committed, and maliciously defended in that miserable realm.

And if ye think that ye are innocent, because ye are not the chief authors of such iniquity, ye are utterly deceived. For God doth not only punish the chief offenders, but with them, doth he condemn the consenters to iniquity; and all are judged to consent, that knowing impiety committed, give no testimony, that the same displeaseth them. (Rom., i.) To speak this matter more plain; as your princes and rulers are criminal, with your bishops, of all idolatry committed, and of all the innocent blood that is shed for the testimony of Christ's truth, and that because they maintain them in their tyranny, so are you (I mean so many of you as give no plain confession to the contrary) criminal and guilty with your princes and rulers, of the same crimes, because ye assist and maintain your princes in their blind rage, and give no declaration that their tyranny displeaseth you.

This doctrine, I know, is strange to the blind world; but the verity of it hath been declared in all notable punishments from the beginning. When the original world perished by water, when Sodom and Gomorrha were consumed by fire, and finally, when Jerusalem was horribly destroyed, doth any man think that all were alike wicked before the world? (Gen., vii, xix.) Evident it is that they were not, if they shall be judged according to their external facts;<sup>1</sup> for some were young, and could not be oppressors, neither yet could

<sup>1</sup> Deeds.

defile themselves with unnatural and beastly lusts ; some were pitiful and gentle of nature, and did not thirst for the blood of Christ, nor of his apostles. But did any escape the plagues and vengeance which apprehended the multitude ? Let the Scriptures witness, and the histories be considered, which plainly do testify, that by the waters all flesh on earth at that time did perish, Noah and his family reserved ; that none escaped in Sodom, and in the other cities adjacent, except Lot and his two daughters. And evident it is, that in the famous city Jerusalem, in that last and horrible destruction of the same, none escaped God's vengeance, except so many as before were dispersed.

And what is the cause of this severity, seeing that all were not alike offenders ? Let flesh cease to dispute with God, and let all men by these examples learn betimes to flee and avoid the society and company of the proud contemners of God, if they list not to be partakers of their plagues. The cause is evident, if we can be subject without grudging to God's judgments, which in themselves are most holy and just. For in the original world, none was found that either did resist tyranny and oppression which universally were used, neither yet, that earnestly reprehended the same. In Sodom, was none found that did withstand that furious and beastly multitude, that did compass about, and besiege the house of Lot ; none would believe Lot, that the city should be destroyed. And finally, in Jerusalem, was none found that studied to repress the tyranny of the priests who were conjured<sup>1</sup> against Christ and his evangel. But all fainted, (I except ever such as gave witness with their

<sup>1</sup> Conspired.

blood or their fleeing, that such impiety displeased them;) all kept silence, by the which, all approved iniquity, and joined hands with the tyrants. And so, were all arrayed and set, as it had been in one battle against the Omnipotent, and against his Son Christ Jesus; for whosoever gathereth not with Christ in the day of his harvest, is judged to scatter: and therefore, of one vengeance temporal were they all partakers.

Which thing, as before I have touched, ought to move you to the deep consideration of your duties, in these last and most perilous times. The iniquity of your bishops is more than manifest. Their filthy lives infect the air; the innocent blood which they shed, crieth vengeance in the ears of our God; the idolatry and abomination which openly they commit, and without punishment maintain, doth corrupt and defile the whole land. And none amongst you doth unfeignedly study for any redress of such enormities. Will God in this behalf hold you as innocents? Be not deceived, dear brethren. God hath punished not only the proud tyrants, filthy persons, and cruel murderers, but also such as with them did draw the yoke of iniquity, were it by flattering their offences, obeying their unjust commandments, or in winking at their manifest iniquity. All such, I say, hath God once punished with the chief offenders. Be ye assured, brethren, that as He is immutable of nature, so will he not pardon in you, that which so severely he hath punished in others; and now the less, because he hath plainly admonished you of the dangers to come, and hath offered you his mercy, before he pour forth his wrath and displeasure upon the inobedient.

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Father of glory, and God of all consolation, give you

the spirit of wisdom, and open unto you the knowledge of himself, by the means of his dear Son, by the which ye may attain to the expectation and hope, that after the troubles of this transitory life, ye may be partakers of the riches of that glorious inheritance which is prepared for such as refuse themselves, and fight under the banner of Christ Jesus in the day of this his battle; that in deep consideration of the same, ye may learn to prefer the invisible and eternal joys, to the vain pleasures that are present. God further grant you his Holy Spirit, righteously to consider what I, in his name, have required of your nobility, and of you, the subjects; and move you altogether so to answer, that my petition be not a testimony of your just condemnation, when the Lord Jesus shall appear, to revenge the blood of his saints, and the contempt of his most holy word. Amen.

Sleep not in sin, for vengeance is prepared against all the inobedient. Flee from Babylon, if ye will not be partakers of her plagues.

Be witness to my Appellation. Grace be with you.

Your brother to command in godliness,

JOHN KNOX.

From Geneva, 14th of July, 1558.

## S E R M O N

## ON CHRIST'S TEMPTATION IN THE WILDERNESS.

“Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert that he should be tempted of the devil.”—Matt., iv, 1.

THE causes moving me to entreat this place of Scripture is, that such as by the inscrutable providence of God do fall into diverse temptations, judge not themselves, by reason thereof, less acceptable in God's presence; but contrariwise, having the way prepared to victory by Christ Jesus, shall not fear above measure the crafty assaults of that subtle serpent, Satan; but with joy and bold courage, having such a guide as here is painted forth, such a champion, and such weapons as here are to be found (if with obedience we will hear, and with unfeigned faith believe,) may assure ourselves of God's present favour, and of final victory, by the means of Him who, for our safeguard and deliverance, hath entered into the battle, and triumphed over his adversary, and all his raging fury.

And that the subsequents heard and understood, may the better be kept in memory, this order by God's grace we purpose to observe, in treating this matter:—

1. What this word Temptation meaneth, and how it is used within the Scriptures.

2. Who is here tempted, and at what time this temptation happened.

3. How, and by what means he was tempted.

4. And Last, Why he should suffer these temptations, and what fruit ensueth to us of the same.

Temptation, or to tempt, in the Scriptures of God is called to try, to prove, or to assault the valour, the power, the will, the pleasure, or the wisdom, whether it be of God or of creatures. And it is taken sometimes in good part, as when it is said, that "God tempted Abraham," "God tempted the people of Israel;" that is, God did try and examine, not for his own knowledge, to whom nothing is hid, but for the certification of others, how obedient Abraham was to God's commandment, and how weak and infirm the Israelites were, in their journey towards the promised land. And this temptation is always good, because it proceedeth immediately from God, to open and make manifest the secret motions of men's hearts, the puissance and power of God's word, and the great lenity and gentleness of God towards the infirmities, the horrible sins, and rebellions of those whom he hath received into his regiment and care. For who would have believed, that the bare word of God could so have moved the heart and affections of Abraham, that to obey God's commandment, he determined to kill with his own hand, his best beloved son Isaac? Who could have trusted, that under so many torments as Job did suffer, he should not speak, in all his great temptations, one foolish word against God? Or who could have thought, that God so mercifully should have pardoned so many and so manifest transgressions committed by his people in the desert; and yet, that his mercy did never utterly leave them, but still continued with them, till at length, he did perform his promise made to Abraham? To whom, I say, could these things have been persuaded, unless, by trial and



temptation taken of his creatures by God, they had come by revelation made in his holy Scriptures to our knowledge?

And so, this kind of temptation is profitable, good, and necessary, as a thing proceeding from God, who is fountain of all goodness, to the manifestation of his own glory, and to the profit of the sufferer, however the flesh judge in the hour of temptation. Otherwise, temptation, or to tempt, is taken in evil part, that is, he that does assault or assails, intendeth destruction and confusion to him that is assaulted; as when Satan tempted the woman in the garden, Job by diverse tribulations, and David by adultery. The Scribes and Pharisees tempted Christ, by diverse means, questions, and subtleties. And of this manner, saith St. James, "God tempteth no man;" that is, by temptation proceeding immediately from him, He intendeth no man's destruction.

And here ye shall note, that albeit Satan appear sometimes to prevail against God's elect, yet is he ever frustrated of his final purpose. By temptation, he led the woman and David from the obedience of God; but he could not retain them for ever under his thralldom. Power was granted to him, to spoil Job of his substance and children, and to strike his body with a plague of sickness most vile and fearful: but he could not compel his mouth to blaspheme God's majesty. And therefore, albeit we be laid open sometimes, as it were, even to the mouth of Satan, let us not think therefore that God hath abjected us, and that he taketh no care over us. No; He permitteth Satan to rage, and as it were, to triumph for a time, that when he hath poured forth the venom of his malice against God's elect, it may return to his own confusion; and

that the deliverance of God's children may be more to his glory, and comfort of the afflicted, knowing that his hand is so puissant, his mercy and good-will so prompt, that he delivereth his little ones from their cruel enemy, even as David did his sheep and lamb from the mouth of the lion. For a benefit received in extreme danger, doth more move us, than the preservation from ten thousand perils, that we fall not in them: and yet, to preserve from dangers and perils, that we fall not in them whether they be of body or spirit, is no less the work of God, than to deliver from them: but the weakness of our faith doth not espy that. But this I omit to better time.

Last, to tempt, betokeneth simply, to prove or try, without any determinate purpose of profit or damage to ensue; as when the mind doubteth of any thing, and therein desireth to be satisfied, without great love or extreme hatred of the thing that is tempted or tried. As the Queen of Sheba came to tempt Solomon in subtle questions; David tempted, that is, tried himself, if he could go in harness; and Gideon saith, "Let not thy anger kindle against me, if I tempt thee yet once again." This famous queen, not fully trusting the bruit and fame that was spread of Solomon, by subtle questions desired to prove his wisdom, at the first neither extremely hating, nor fervently loving the person of the king. And David, as a man not accustomed to harness, would try, how he was able to go, and behave, and fashion himself therein, before that so enarmed, he would hazard battle with Goliath. And Gideon, not satisfied in his conscience by the first sign that he received, desired, without contempt or hatred of God, the second time to be certified of his vocation. And in this sense must the

apostle be expounded, when he commandeth us to tempt, that is, to try and examine ourselves, if we stand in faith. And this much for the term.

Now, to the person tempted, and to the time and place of his temptation. The person tempted, is the only well-beloved Son of God. The time, was immediately after his baptism; and the place, was the desert or wilderness.

But that we may make our fruit of the premises, we must consider the same more profoundly. That the Son of God was thus tempted, giveth to us instruction, that temptations, although they be never so grievous and fearful, do not separate us from God's favour and mercies; but rather, declare the great graces of God to pertain to us, which maketh Satan to rage as a roaring lion: for against none doth he so fiercely fight, as against those, in whose hearts Christ hath taken possession. The time of Christ's temptation is here most diligently to be noted. Then, that is (as Mark and Luke do witness) immediately after the voice of God the Father had commended his Son to the world, and had visibly appointed him, by the sign of the Holy Ghost. He was led or moved to go, by the Spirit, to a wilderness, where forty days he remained fasting among the wild beasts. This Spirit which led Christ into the desert, was not the devil, but the Holy Spirit of God the Father, by whom Christ, as touching his human and manly nature, was conducted and led, likewise as by the same Spirit he was strengthened and made strong, and finally, raised up from the dead. The Spirit of God, I say, led Christ to the place of his battle, where long time he endured the combat; for the whole forty days and nights, as Luke saith, he was tempted: but in the

end most vehemently, after his continuall fasting, and that he began to be hungry.

Upon these forty days, and this fasting of Christ, do our Papists found and build their Lent: for, say they, All the actions of Christ are our instructions; what he did we ought to follow; but he fasted forty days, therefore, we ought to do the like. I answer, If that we ought to follow all Christ's actions, then ought we neither to eat nor drink the space of forty days, for so fasted Christ: we ought to go upon the waters with our feet, to cast out devils by our word, to heal and cure all sorts of maladies, to call again the dead to life; for so did Christ. This I write, only that men may see the vanity of these men, who boasting themselves of wisdom, are become mad fools. Did Christ fast these forty days, to teach us a superstitious fasting? Can the Papists assure me, or any other man, which were the forty days that Christ fasted? Plain it is, he fasted the forty days and nights that immediately did follow his baptism; but which they were, or in what month was the day of his baptism, the Scripture does not express. And albeit the day were expressed, am I, or any Christian, bound to counterfeit Christ's actions, as the ape counterfeiteth the act or work of man? He himself requireth no such obedience of his true followers, but saith to his apostles, "Go and preach the Evangel to all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Command them to observe and keep all that I have commanded you." Here, Christ Jesus requireth the observation of his precepts and commandments, and not of his actions, except in so far as he hath also commanded them. And so must the apostle be understood, when he saith,

“Be followers of Christ, for Christ hath suffered for us, that we should follow his footsteps”—which can not be understood of every action of Christ, neither in the mystery of our redemption, neither in his actions and marvellous works, but only of those which he hath commanded us to observe.

But when the Papists are so diligent in establishing their dreams and fantasies, they lose the profit which here is to be gathered; that is, Why Christ did fast those forty days—which were a doctrine more necessary for Christians, than to corrupt the simple hearts with superstition, as though the Wisdom of God, Christ Jesus, had taught us no other mystery by his fasting, than the abstinence from flesh, or once on the day to eat flesh, the space of forty days. God hath taken a just vengeance upon the pride of such men, while he thus confoundeth the wisdom of those that do most glory in wisdom; and doth strike with blindness, such as will be guides and lanthorns to the feet of others, and yet, refuse themselves to hear or follow the light of God’s word. From such, deliver thy poor flock, O Lord!

The causes of Christ’s fasting these forty days, I find chiefly to be two: the former, to witness to the world, the dignity and excellency of that vocation which Christ, after his baptism, was to take upon him openly: Secondly, to declare, that he entered in battle willingly for our cause, and doth, as it were, provoke his adversary to assault him.

Albeit Christ Jesus, in the eternal counsel of his Father, was appointed to be the Prince of Peace, the Angel, that is, the Messenger of his testament, and he alone that should fight our battles for us, yet did he not enter in execution of it in the eyes of men,

till that he was commended to mankind by the voice of his heavenly Father, and as he was placed and anointed by the Holy Ghost, by a visible sign given to the eyes of men. After which time, he was led to the desert, and fasted, as before is said. And this he did, to teach us with what fear, carefulness, and reverence, ought the messengers of the word to enter in the vocation which is not only most excellent, (for who is worthy to be God's ambassador?) but also, subject to most extreme troubles and dangers. For he that is appointed pastor, watchman, or preacher, if he feed not with his whole power; if he warn and admonish not when he sees the sword come; and if in doctrine he divideth not the word righteously, the blood and souls of those that perish for lack of food, admonition, and doctrine, shall be required of his hand. If our horned and mitred bishops did understand, and firmly believe this, I think, they should be otherwise occupied than they have been this long time bypast.

But to our purpose:—That Christ exceeded not the space of forty days in his fasting, he doth it, to the imitation of Moses and Elias; of whom, the one before the receiving of the law, and the other before the communication and reasoning which he had with God in Mount Horeb, (in which he was commanded to anoint Hazael king over Syria, and Jehu king over Israel, and Elisha to be prophet) fasted the same number of days. The thing that ensued and did follow the supernatural fasting of these two servants of God, Moses and Elias, did impair and diminish the tyranny and kingdom of Satan: for by the law came the knowledge of sin, the damnation of such impieties, (specially, of idolatry, and such as the devil had in-

vented;) and finally, by the law came such a revelation of God's will, that no man could justly afterward excuse his sin, by ignorance, by which the devil before had blinded many. So that the law, albeit it might not renew and purge the heart, (for that worketh the spirit of Christ Jesus by faith only,) yet it was a bridle, that did let and stay the rage of external wickedness in many; and was a schoolmaster also, that led unto Christ. For when man can find no power in himself to do that which is commanded, and perfectly doth understand and believe, that the curse of God is pronounced against all those that abide not in every thing that is commanded in God's law to do them; the man, I say, that understandeth and knoweth his own corrupt nature, and God's severe judgment, most gladly will receive the free redemption offered by Christ Jesus, which is the only victory that overthroweth Satan and his power. And so, by the giving of the law, did God greatly weaken, impair, and make feeble the tyranny and kingdom of the devil.

In the days of Elias had the devil so prevailed, that kings and rulers made open war against God, killing his prophets, destroying his ordinances, and erecting up idolatry; which did so prevail, that the prophet complained, that of all the true fearers and worshippers of God, he was left alone, and wicked Jezebel sought his life also. After this his fasting and complaint, he was sent by God to anoint these persons afore-named, who took such vengeance upon the wicked and obstinate idolaters, (God grant our eyes may see the like, to his glory, and comfort of his afflicted flock!) that he that escaped the sword of Hazael, fell into the hands of Jehu, and those whom Jehu left, escaped not God's vengeance under Elisha.

The remembrance of this was fearful to Satan; for at the coming of Christ Jesus, was impiety in highest degree amongst those that pretended most knowledge of God's will, and Satan was at such rest in his kingdom, that the priests, scribes, and pharisees, had taken away the key of knowledge; that is, they had so obscured and darkened God's holy Scriptures, by false glosses and vain traditions, that neither would they enter themselves into the kingdom of God, neither suffer and permit others to enter; but violently restrained, and with tyranny struck back from the right way, (that is, from Christ Jesus himself,) such as would have entered into possession of the life everlasting by him. Satan, I say, having such dominion over the chief rulers of the visible kirk, and espying in Christ such graces as before he had not seen in man, and considering him to follow in fasting the footsteps of Moses and Elias, no doubt, did greatly fear the quietness and rest of his most obedient servants, the priests and their adherents, to be troubled by Christ; and therefore, by all ingine and craft doth he assault him, to see what advantage he could have of him. And Christ did not repel him (as by the power of his Godhead he might) that he should not tempt him; but permitted him to spend all his artillery, and did receive the strokes and assaults of his temptations in his own body, to the end he might make weak and feeble the strength and tyrannous power of our adversary, by long-suffering.

For thus, methinks, our Master and Champion, Christ Jesus, did provoke our enemy to battle: Satan, thou gloriest of thy power and victory over mankind, that there is none able to withstand thy assaults, nor escape thy dart, but at one time or other thou givest



him a wound. Lo, I am a man like to my brethren, having flesh and blood, and all properties of man's nature, sin, which is thy venom, excepted. Tempt, try, and assault me. I offer thee here a place most convenient,—the wilderness:—there shall be no mortal creature to comfort me against thy assaults; thou shalt have time sufficient to do what thou canst; I shall not fly the place of battle. If thou become victor, thou may still continue in possession of thy kingdom in this wretched world: but if thou canst not prevail against me, then must thy prey and unjust spoil be taken from thee; thou must grant thyself vanquished and confounded, and must be compelled to leave off from all accusation of the members of my body; for to them doth appertain the fruit of my battle; my victory is their's, as I am appointed to take the punishment of their sins in my body. Oh, dear sisters! what comfort ought the remembrance of these things be to our hearts! Christ Jesus hath fought our battle; he himself hath taken us in his care and protection. Howsoever the devil rage by temptations, be they spiritual or corporal, he is not able to bereave us out of the hand of the potent Son of God. To Him be all glory, for his mercies most abundantly poured forth upon us!

There resteth yet to be spoken of, the Time when our Head was tempted; which began immediately after his baptism: whereupon we have to note and mark, that albeit the malice of Satan doth never cease, but always seeketh the means to trouble the godly, yet sometimes he rageth more fiercely than at others; and that is, commonly, when God beginneth to manifest his love and favour to any of his children; and at the end of their battle, when they are nearest to

obtain final victory. The devil, no doubt, did at all times envy the humble spirit which was in Abel ; but he did not stir up the carnal heart of Cain against him, till God did declare his favour towards him, by acceptation of his sacrifice. The same we find in Jacob, Joseph, David, and most evidently in Christ Jesus. How raged Satan at the tidings of Christ's nativity ! What blood caused he to be shed, of purpose to have murdered Christ in his infancy, the evangelist Saint Matthew doth witness ; that in all the coasts and borders of Bethlehem, were the children of two years old, and of his age, murdered without mercy—a fearful spectacle, and horrible example of insolent and unaccustomed tyranny ! And what is the cause moving Satan thus to rage against innocents, considering, that by reason of their imperfections, they could not hurt his kingdom at that instant ? Oh, the crafty eye of Satan looked farther than to the present time ! He heard bruited by the three wise men, that they had learned by the appearance of a star, that the King of the Jews was born ; and he was not ignorant, that the time prophesied of Christ's coming, was then instant : for a stranger was clad with the crown and sceptre, in the kingdom of Judah ; the angels had declared the glad tidings to the pastors, that a Saviour, which was Christ the Lord, was born in the city of David. All these tidings inflamed the wrath and malice of Satan ; for he perfectly understood, that the coming of the promised Seed was appointed to his confusion, and to the breaking down of his head and tyranny. And therefore he raged most cruelly, even at the first hearing of Christ's birth, thinking, that albeit he could not let nor withstand his coming, yet should he shorten his days upon earth,

lest by long life, and peaceable quietness in it, the number of good men, by Christ's doctrine and virtuous life should be multiplied. And so, he intended, before that ever he can open his mouth in his Father's message, to cut him off amongst the other children. Oh cruel Serpent ! in vain dost thou spend thy venom ; for the days of God's elect thou canst not shorten, and when the wheat-corn is fallen in the ground, then doth it most multiply.

But of these precedents, mark, dear sisters, what hath been the practice of the devil from the beginning ; most cruelly to rage against God's children, when God beginneth to show them his mercy. And therefore, marvel not, dearly beloved, albeit the like come unto you. If Satan fume and roar against you, whether it be against your bodies by persecution, or inward in your conscience by a spiritual battle, be not discouraged, as though ye were less acceptable in God's presence, or as that Satan might at any time prevail against you. No: your temptations and storms that do arise so suddenly, argue and witness, that the seed that is sown, is fallen in good ground, beginneth to take root, and shall by God's grace bring forth fruit abundantly, in due season and convenient time. And that is it which Satan doth fear ; and therefore thus he rageth, and shall rage against you, thinking, that if he can repulse you now suddenly in the beginning, that then ye shall be at all times an easy prey, never able to resist his assaults. But as my hope is good, so shall my prayer be, that so ye may be strengthened, that the world, and Satan himself may understand and perceive, that God fighteth your battle. For ye remember, sisters, that being present with you, and entreating the same place, I admonished you, that

Satan could not long sleep, when his kingdom was oppugned ; and therefore, I willed you, if that ye were in mind to continue with Christ, to prepare yourselves for the day of temptation. The person of the speaker is wretched, miserable, and nothing to be regarded ; but the things that were spoken, are the infallible and eternal truth of God, without observation of the which, never can, nor shall come, life to mankind. God grant your continuance to the end.

This much have I briefly spoken of the temptation of Christ Jesus ; who was tempted ; and of the time and place of his temptation. Now resteth to be spoken, How he was tempted, and by what means.

The most part of expositors do think, that all this temptation was in spirit and imagination only, the corporal senses being nothing moved. I will contend with no man in such cases, but patiently will I suffer every man to abound in his own knowledge ; and without prejudice of any man's estimation, I offer my judgment to be weighed and considered by christian charity. It appeareth to me by the plain text, that Christ suffered this temptation in body and spirit : that likewise, as the hunger which Christ did suffer, and the desert in which he remained, were not things presented to the imagination, but that the body did verily remain in the wilderness among beasts, and after forty days did hunger and faint, for lack of food ; so, the external ear shall hear the tempting words of Satan, which did enter into the knowledge of the soul ; which repelling the venom of such temptations, caused the tongue to speak, and confute Satan, to our unspeakable comfort and consolation. It appeareth also, that the body of Christ Jesus was carried by Satan from the wilderness, unto the temple

of Jerusalem, and that it was placed upon the pinnacle of the same temple; from whence it was carried to a high mountain, and there tempted. If any man can show the contrary hereof by the plain scriptures of God, with all submission and thanksgiving I will prefer his judgment to my own. But if the matter stand only in probability, and opinion of men, then is it lawful for me to believe as the Scripture here speaketh: that is, that Satan spake, and Christ answered; and Satan took him, and carried him from one place to another. Besides the evidence of the text affirming these precedents, that Satan was permitted to carry the body of Christ from place to place, and yet was not permitted to execute any further tyranny against it, is most singular comfort to such as be afflicted, or troubled in body or spirit. The weak and feeble conscience of man, under such temptations, doth commonly gather and collect a false consequent. For thus doth man reason: The body or the spirit is vexed by assaults and temptations of Satan, and he doth carry or molest it; therefore God is angry with it, and taketh no care over it. I answer, tribulations and grievous vexations of body or of mind are not ever signs of God's displeasure against the sufferer; neither yet doth it follow, that God hath cast away the care of his creatures, because he permits them to be molested and vexed for a time. For if any sort of tribulation were the infallible sign of God's displeasure, then should we condemn the best beloved children of God. But of this matter we may perhaps speak after this more amply.

Now to the temptation. Verse 2nd, "*And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterwards hungered.*" Verse 3rd, "*Then came to him the*

*Tempter, and said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread," etc.*

Why Christ fasted forty days, and would not exceed the same (without sense and feeling of hunger,) is partly before touched. That is, he would provoke the devil to battle, by the wilderness and long abstinence ; but he would not usurp nor arrogate more to himself, in that case, than God had wrought with others his servants and messengers before. Not but that Christ Jesus (as St. Augustine doth more amply declare,) without feeling of hunger, might have endured the whole year, yea, time without end, as well as he did endure the space of forty days ; for the nature of the manhood was sustained these forty days, by the invisible power of God, which is at all times of equal power. But Christ willing to offer further occasion to Satan to proceed in tempting of him, permitted the human nature to crave earnestly that which it lacked, that is to say, refreshing of meat ; which being perceived, Satan taketh occasion, as aforesaid, to tempt and assault. Some judge, that Satan tempted Christ to gluttony : but this appeareth little to agree with the purpose of the Holy Ghost, who sheweth us this history, to let us understand, that Satan never ceaseth to oppugn the children of God ; but continually, by one mean or other, driveth and provoketh them to some wicked opinions of their God : And to have them desire stones to have been converted into bread, or to have desired the hunger to have been satisfied, hath never been sin, neither yet, wicked opinion of God.

And therefore, I doubt not but the temptation was more spiritual, more subtle, and more dangerous. Satan hath respect to the voice of God, which hath pronounced Christ to be his well-beloved Son, etc.

Against this voice he fights, as his nature is ever to do, against the assured and immutable word of God. For such is his malice against God, and against his chosen children, that where and to whom God pronounces love and mercy, to these threatens he displeasure and damnation ; and where God threatens death, there is he bold to pronounce life. And for this cause, is Satan called, a “Liar from the beginning.” And so, the purpose of Satan is, to drive Christ into desperation, that he shall not believe the former voice of God his Father.

And so, this appeareth to be the meaning of his temptation : Thou hast heard (would Satan say,) a voice proclaimed in the air, that thou wast the beloved Son of God, in whom his soul was well pleased. But may you not be judged more nor mad, and fonder than the brainless fool, if you do believe any such promise ? Where are the signs of his love ? Art thou not abject from comfort of all creature ? Thou art in worse case than the brute beasts : for every day they hunt for their prey, and the earth produceth grass and herbs for their sustentation, so that none of them are pined and consumed away by hunger. But thou hast fasted forty days and nights, ever waiting upon some relief and comfort from above ; but thy best provision is hard stones. If thou dost glory in thy God, and dost verily believe the promise that is made, command that these stones be bread. But evident it is, that so thou canst not do ; for if thou couldst, or if thy God would have showed thee any such pleasure, thou mightest long ago have removed thy hunger ; and need not to have endured this languishing, for lack of food. But seeing thou hast long continued, and no provision is made for thee, vanity

it is, longer to believe any such promise. And therefore, despair of any help from God's hand, and provide for thyself by some other means.

Many words have I used here, dearly beloved; but I cannot express the thousandth part of the malicious despite which lurked in this one temptation of Satan. It is a mocking of Christ and of his obedience; it is a plain denial of God's promise; it is the triumphing voice of him that appeareth to have gotten victory. Oh! how bitter this temptation is, no creature can understand, but such as feebleth the dolour of such darts as Satan casteth at the tender conscience of those that gladly would rest and repose in God, and in the promises of his mercy.

But here is to be noted the ground and foundation of this temptation. The conclusion of Satan is this: Thou art none of God's elect, much less, his well-beloved Son. His reason is this: Thou art in trouble, and findest no relief. Then the foundation of the temptation was Christ's poverty, and the lack of food, without hope of remedy to be sent from God; and it is the same temptation which the devil objected to him by the princes of the priests, in his grievous torments upon the cross. For this they cry, "If he be the Son of God, let him come down from the cross, and we shall believe in him: he trusted in God; let Him deliver him, if he have pleasure in him." As that they would say, God is the deliverer of his servants from troubles: God never permits those that fear him, to come to confusion. This man we see in extreme trouble: if he be the Son of God, or yet, a true worshipper of his name, He will deliver him from this calamity. If He deliver him not, but suffer him to perish in these anguishes, then is it an assured sign,



that God hath rejected him, as a hypocrite that shall have no portion of his glory.

Thus, I say, taketh Satan occasion to tempt, and moveth also others to judge and condemn God's elect and chosen children, by reason, that troubles are multiplied upon them. But with what weapons we ought to fight against such enemies and assaults, we shall learn, in the answer of Christ Jesus which followeth: Verse 4th, "*But he answering, said, It is written, man liveth not by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" This answer of Christ, proveth the sentence which we have brought of the afore-named temptation, to be the very meaning of the Holy Ghost: for unless the purpose of Satan had been, to have removed Christ from all hope of God's merciful providence towards him, in that his necessity, Christ had answered nothing directly to his words, saying, "Command that these stones be made bread." But Christ Jesus perceiving his art and malicious subtlety, answereth directly to his meaning, his words nothing regarded: in which answer, Satan was so confounded, that he was ashamed to reply any further in that behalf.

But that ye may the better understand the meaning of Christ's answer, we will phrase and repeat it over in more words: Thou labourest, Satan, (will Christ say,) to bring in my heart a doubt and suspicion of my Father's promise, which was openly proclaimed in my baptism. By reason of my hunger, and that I lack all carnal provision, thou art bold to affirm, that God taketh no care over me. But thou art a deceitful, and false corrupt sophister, and thy argument is vain, and full of blasphemies; for thou bindest God's love, mercy, and providence to

the having, or wanting of corporal provision, which no part of God's Scriptures do teach us; but rather they express the contrary, as it is written, "Man liveth not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God:" That is, the very life and felicity of man, consisteth not in abundance of corporal things; for the possession and having of them maketh no man blessed nor happy, neither shall the lack of them be the cause of his final misery: but the very life of man consisteth in God, and in his promises pronounced by his own mouth, unto the which, whoso cleaveth and sticketh unfeignedly, shall live the life everlasting. And although all creatures on earth forsake him, yet shall not his corporal life perish, till the time appointed by God approach; for God hath means to feed, preserve, and maintain, unknown to man's reason, and contrary to the common course of nature. He fed his people Israel in the desert, forty years, without the provision of man; he preserved Jonah in the whale's belly, and maintained and kept the bodies of the three children, in the furnace and fire. Reason and the natural man could have seen nothing in these cases, but destruction and death; and could have judged nothing, but that God had cast away the care of these his creatures. And yet, was his providence most vigilant towards them, in the extremity of their dangers, from which he did so deliver them, and in the midst of them did so assist them, that his glory, which is his mercy and goodness, did more appear and shine after their troubles, than it could have done, if they had not fallen in them. And therefore, I measure not the truth and favour of God, by having or by lacking of corporal necessities, but by the promise that he hath

made to me. As He himself is immutable, so is his word and promise constant, which I believe, and to which I stick and do cleave, whatever come externally to the body.

In this answer of Christ, we may espy what weapons are to be used against our adversary, the devil, and how that we may confute his arguments, which craftily, and of malice, he maketh against God's elect. Christ might have repulsed Satan with a word, or through commanding him to silence, as he to whom all power was given in heaven and earth. But it pleased his mercy to teach us, how to use the sword of the Holy Ghost, which is, the word of God, in battle against our spiritual enemy. The scripture that Christ brought, is written in the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. It was spoken by Moses, a little before his death, to establish the people in God's merciful providence: For in the same chapter, and in certain others that go before, he reckoneth the great travail and diverse dangers, with the extreme necessities that they had sustained in the desert, the space of forty years; and yet, notwithstanding, how constant God had been, in keeping and performing his promise for them: through all perils had he conducted them, to the sight and borders of the promised land.

And so, this scripture most directly answereth to the temptation of Satan. For thus doth Satan reason (as before is said :) Thou art in poverty, and hast no provision to sustain thy life; therefore God taketh no regard nor care over thee, as he doth over his chosen children. Christ Jesus answereth, Thy argument is false and vain; for poverty or necessity secludeth not the providence or care of God; which is easy to be proved by the people of God, Israel, which in the

desert did oftentimes lack things necessary to sustentation of the life, and for lack of the same they grudged and murmured. Yet did never the Lord cast away the providence and care of them; but according to the voice that he had once pronounced, to wit, that they were his peculiar people, and according to the promise made to Abraham, and to them before the departure from Egypt, he still remained their conductor and guide, till he placed them in peaceable possession of the land of Canaan, their great infirmities and manifold transgressions notwithstanding.

Thus are we taught, I say, by Christ Jesus, to repulse Satan and his assaults by the word of God, and to apply the examples of his mercies which he hath showed to others before us, to our own souls, in the hour of temptation and in the time of our troubles; for what God doth to one at any time, the same appertaineth to all that hang and depend upon God and his promises. And therefore, howsoever we be assaulted by Satan, our adversary, within the word of God is armour and weapons sufficient.

The chief craft of Satan is, to trouble those that begin to decline from his obedience, and to declare themselves enemies to iniquity, with diverse assaults; the end whereof is always one, that is, to put variance betwixt them and God into their conscience, that they should not repose and rest themselves in his assured promises. And to persuade this, he useth and inventeth diverse arguments. Sometimes he calleth the sins of their youth, and which they have committed in the time of blindness, to their remembrance: very oft, he objecteth their unthankfulness towards God, and present imperfections, by sickness, poverty,

tribulations in their household, or by persecution. He can allege, that God is angry, and regards not; or by the spiritual cross, which few feel, and fewer do understand the utility and profit of it, he would drive God's children to desperation: and by infinite means more, goeth he about, seeking, like a roaring lion, to undermine and destroy our faith. But impossible it is for him to prevail against us, unless that obstinately we do refuse to use the defence and weapon that God hath offered; yea, I say, that God's elect cannot refuse it, but seek for their defender, when the battle is most strong: for the sobs, groanings, and lamentations of such as fight; yea, the fear they have to be vanquished, the calling and praying they make for continuance, are the undoubted and right seeking of Christ, our champion. We refuse not the weapon, although sometimes by infirmity, we cannot use it as we would. It sufficeth, that the heart unfeignedly sob for greater strength, for continuance, and for final deliverance by Christ Jesus. That which lacketh in us, his sufficiency doth supply, for it is He that fighteth and overcometh for us.

But for bringing of the examples of the Scriptures, if God permit, in the end we shall speak more largely, when it shall be entreated, why Christ permitted himself thus to be tempted. Sundry impediments now do call me from writing in this matter; but by God's grace, at convenient leisure, I purpose to finish, and to send unto you. I grant the matter that proceedeth from me, is not worthy your labours and pains to read it; yet seeing it is a testimony of my good mind towards you, I doubt not, but you will accept it in good part.

God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, grant

unto you, to find favour and mercy in the presence of that Judge, whose eyes and knowledge do pierce through the secret cogitations of all hearts, in the day of temptation which shall apprehend all flesh, according to that mercy which you, illuminated and directed by his Holy Spirit, have shown unto the afflicted. The God of all comfort and consolation confirm and strengthen you in his virtue, unto the end. Amen.

## ANSWER

## TO SOME QUESTIONS ON BAPTISM, ETC.

**T**HE baptism now used in the Papistry, is not the true baptism which Christ Jesus did institute, and command to be used in his Kirk; but it is an adulteration and profanation of the same, and therefore, is to be avoided of all God's children.

That it is adulterate, and so, consequently, profane, is evident; First, for many things be added, besides Christ's institution; and all man's additions in God's perfect ordinance, especially in his religion, are execrable and detestable before him. Secondly, the promises of salvation in Christ Jesus, are not in the papistical baptism lively and truly explained to the people; the word is not preached, yea, that which they need, is not understood. The end and use of a true sacrament is not considered, but rather, are the people led to put their confidence in the bare ceremony.

That none of God's children ought, or may, with pure conscience offer their children to the papistical baptism, one reason of the Holy Ghost pronounced by St. Paul, may instruct and assure such as rather list to be obedient, than contentious. "I would not," saith he, "that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye may not drink of the Lord's cup, and the cup of devils: ye may not be partaker of the Lord's table, and the table of devils." If the causes why sacraments were instituted be rightly understood and considered, this reason of the apostle shall condemn all

those that offer their children to an adulterate sign: for as sacraments, besides their other uses and ends, are ordained to be seals of the righteousness of faith, so are they also a declaration of our profession before the world, and an approbation of that doctrine and religion, which is taught by such as with whom we communicate, in receiving the sacraments. Now, evident it is, that the papistical doctrine, in the chief point of our salvation, and their whole religion, is as contrarious to Christ's doctrine and true religion, as darkness is unto light; which nevertheless is allowed before the world, by all such as communicate with any of their adulterate sacrilege—for sacraments they cannot be properly called. I add, whosoever offer their children to the papistical baptism, offer them to the devil, who was author and first inventor of all such abominations; and therefore, whosoever communicateth with the papistical sacraments, approveth, and before the world alloweth, whatsoever doctrine and religion they profess. Yea, further, who offer their children to the papistical baptism, offer them not to God, nor to Christ Jesus his Son, but to the devil, chief author and inventor of such abominations.

“Shall we be baptised again, (do some demand,) that in our infancy were polluted with that adulterate sign?” I answer, no; for the spirit of regeneration, which is freely given to us by Christ Jesus, our whole sufficiency, hath purged us from that poison which we drank in the days of our blindness. The fire of the Holy Ghost hath burnt away whatsoever we received at their hands besides Christ Jesus' simple institution. We condemn it as detestable and wicked; and only we approve Christ's ordinance, the vain inventions of all men refused. And this, both before God and man



sufficeth, without alteration of the sign; for by faith, and not by external signs, doth God purge our hearts. And our plain and continual confession more serveth to me, than that we should be rebaptised; for that action, and the remembrance of it, should suddenly vanish, when contrariwise, our confession declareth, that in our infancy we received the sign which Christ commanded, which our parents esteemed to have been the true sign of Christ. And in very deed, the malice of the devil could never altogether abolish Christ's institution, for it was ministered to us in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And yet for that time, I confess, by reason of our blindness, it did not profit us, because it was adulterate, and mixed with men's dreams and fantasies. I confess, for the time it did not profit us; but now as said is, the Spirit of Christ Jesus illuminating our hearts, hath purged the same by faith, and maketh the effect of that sacrament to work in us, without any iteration of the external sign.

Hereof I know may two doubts arise: Former, that to the regenerate man, the sacraments are not necessary greatly; Secondly, that it is all one whether our children be baptised with the papistical baptism, or with Christ's true institution. The first I answer, That no man is so regenerate, but that continually he hath need of the means which Christ Jesus, the Wisdom of his eternal Father, hath appointed to be used in his kirk; to wit, the word truly preached, and the sacraments rightly administered. The word and the sacraments has Christ Jesus ordained and commanded to be used in his kirk; therefore ought not the bold presumption of man to separate the same. If the regenerate man hath never received the sacramental

sign of baptism, he is bound to receive the same: and that did Peter perfectly understand, seeing the Holy Ghost visibly descend upon Cornelius and his household; which he perfectly understood could not be, without the spirit of regeneration. And that doth he contend and obtain, that they should not be forbidden to be baptised. And Paul also, after his conversion, and after that Christ Jesus had promised that he was a chosen vessel to him, yet was commanded to wash away his sins by baptism. Whereof it is evident, that regeneration doth not so exempt man, but that once he ought to be baptised.

But the question is, Whether a man baptised in papistry, ought to be re-baptised, when he cometh to knowledge? And I answer, he ought not; First, because Christ's institution, as said is, could not be utterly abolished by the malice of Satan, nor by the abuse of man. Secondly, because the spirit of Christ purgeth, and removeth from us all such venom as we received of their hands; and superstition maketh not the virtue of Christ's institution to be ineffectual in us. We have some respect also, that no more be given to the external sign, than is proper to it; that is, that it be the seal of righteousness, and the sign of regeneration, but neither the cause, neither yet the effect and virtue. The seal once received is durable, and needeth not to be iterated, lest that by iteration and multiplication of the sign, the office of the Holy Spirit, which is, to illuminate, regenerate, and to purge, be attributed unto it.

"But by the same reason," may some reply, "ought not the Lord's table to be commonly used?" Yes; but if the signification of both sacraments be deeply considered, we shall see, why the one ought to be but once

used, and the other oftentimes; for the holy disciples and servants of Christ Jesus dare not dispense with the ordinance of their Lord and Saviour, but rather are humbly subject to the same. And therefore, such as this day condemn the use of sacraments—of the Lord's Table, I mean,—and also, the external word, declare themselves repugnant to the Wisdom of God, who hath commanded his disciples, to use that Table in remembrance of him, that is, of his death, and of the benefits purchased unto us by the same, till his rising again. He putteth no term of perfection, what a man may attain in this life, that he needeth not to use the sacraments, for aid and help to his infirmity; albeit some now-a-days<sup>1</sup> brag of such perfection, that they suppose all such exercises to appertain only to them that are children and infants in Christ, and not to those that are grown to perfection. But as the punishment of such pride and arrogancy is manifest this day to the kirk of God,—for their perfection hath brought them to such obstinacy and blindness, that openly they blaspheme Christ Jesus—so shall it be felt by them, when such as with full obedience so knit themselves to Christ's ordinance shall receive the crown of glory.

Baptism is the sign of our first entrance in the household of God our Father; by the which is signified, that we are received in league with him; that we are clad with Christ's righteousness, our sins and filthiness being washed away in his blood. Now, evident it is, that the righteousness of Christ Jesus is permanent, and cannot be defiled; that the league of God is of that firmness and assurance, that rather shall the covenant made with the sun and moon, with

<sup>1</sup> The Anabaptists.

the day and night, perish and be changed, than that the promise of his mercy made to his elect shall be frustrate and vain. Now, if Christ's righteousness be inviolable, and the league of God be constant and sure, it is not necessary, that the sign which representeth unto me, and in some manner scaleth in my conscience that I am received in league with God, and so, clad with Christ's righteousness, be oftener than once received; for the iteration of it should declare, that before, I was a stranger from God, who never had publicly been received in his household.

"Not so," shall some say; "but because we have declined from God, by manifest iniquity; and we, so far as in us lay, have broken that league made between God and us, and have spoiled ourselves of all Christ's righteousness; therefore desire we the former league to be repaired and renewed, by iteration of the sign." I answer, The iteration of baptism, is not the mean which God hath appointed, to assure our conscience, that the league betwixt God and us is permanent and sure; but his Holy Spirit, writing in our hearts true and unfeigned repentance, leadeth us to the throne of our Father's mercy. And He, according as he has chosen us in Christ Jesus, his only well-beloved, before the foundation of all worlds were laid, and according as in time he hath called us, and given to us the sign of his children, so doth he acknowledge and avow us yet to be of his heavenly household. And to seal the same his everlasting mercy more deeply in our hearts, and to declare the same before the world, He sendeth us to the table of his dear Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, which, at his last supper in this corporal life had with his disciples, he did institute for his kirk, and command the same to be used, in

remembrance of him to his coming again. To the which when we present ourselves, as in heart we do believe (I speak of God's chosen children,) so in mouth we do confess, and before the world solemnly we protest, that we are the household of God our Father, received in the league of his mercy according to the purpose of his own good pleasure; and that we, members of the body of Christ Jesus, were clad with his righteousness and innocency. And therefore, now doth he admit us to his table, and expressly, in his word, setteth before us the bread of life which descended from heaven, to assure our consciences, that our former defection from him notwithstanding, with joy doth he receive us, as the father did his unthankful and prodigal son, returning to him from his wretched condition, and miserable poverty. This holy table, I say, hath the wisdom of God commanded to be used in his kirk, to assure the members of his body, that his majesty changeth not as man doth, but that his gifts and vocation are such, as of the which he cannot repent him towards his elect. And therefore need they not to run to the external sign of baptism, such, I mean, as once have been baptised, suppose that it was in the papistry. But they ought to have recourse to the effect and signification of baptism; that is, that of free grace and mercy they are received in the household of God: and for better confirmation of themselves in that mystery, and to protest the same before the world, they ought to address themselves, as occasion shall be offered, to the Lord's table, as before is said.

Hereof I suppose it is proved, that baptism once received, sufficeth in this life, but that the use of the Lord's table is oftentimes necessary: for the one, to

wit, baptism, is the sign of our first entrance; but the other, is the declaration of our covenant, that by Christ Jesus we be invested, maintained, and continued in the league with God our Father. The sign of our first entrance needeth not to be iterated, because the league is constant and sure; but the sign of our investment and continuance, by reason of our dulness, infirmity, and oblivion, ought oft to be used. And therefore, whosoever shall yet object, that if the papistical baptism can in no sort seal in our hearts the league of God's mercy, since that they, as apostates and traitors, have declined from Christ Jesus, refused his righteousness, and established their own; in few words I answer, that so was whole Israel under Jeroboam, and yet, did none of God's prophets require of those that were circumcised by the priest of Bethel, and by others in that confusion and idolatry, to be circumcised again; but that only they should turn their hearts to the living God, that they should refuse idolatry, and join themselves with the sanctuary of the living God, which was placed at Jerusalem, as in the days of Hezekiah and Josiah is evident. No more ought we to iterate baptism, by whomsoever it was ministered unto us in our infancy; but if God of his mercy call us from blindness, he maketh our baptism, how corrupt that ever it was, available unto us, by the power of his Holy Spirit.

"But then," shall some say, "it is alike whether my child be baptised with Christ's true institution, or with the adulterate sign." God avert from us that wilful and foolish blindness! for if so unthankfully we rend God's benefits offered, we and our posterity most justly merit to be deprived of the same; as no doubt they shall, who so lightly do esteem them, that they

make no difference nor conscience whether they dedicate and offer their children to God, or unto the devil. Neither shall the deeds of our fathers, who did offer us to the same baptism, excuse. No, for according to the blindness of those times, they judged and esteemed that to be the perfect ordinance and institution of Christ Jesus, and therefore in simplicity, albeit in error, did they offer us, their children, to the same. They did not offer us to be circumcised with the Jew, or with the Turk, but to be baptised as members of Christ's body. The religion was corrupt, and the sign adulterate, I confess; but this was unknown to them, and therefore are not their errors and blindness imputed upon us, their posterity. But what shall this avail us, to whom the light shineth, and the verity is so plainly revealed, that our own conscience must bear record that we do wrong, not of ignorance, but rather of malice; or that we dare not avow Christ Jesus before the world? Shall it not be said unto us, "This is condemnation, that the light is come into the world; but now, men love darkness more nor light. If I had not come, and had spoken unto them, they had had no sin; but now, have they nothing whereby to excuse themselves, because they have seen, and yet do hate"? This assuredly it shall be said to our confusion, if we proceed in such contempt of the graces offered. This, I trust, shall suffice the moderate.

Touching the blood of beasts forbidden to be eaten by the apostle, it doth not bind this day the conscience of Christians: for it was but temporal, and served only till such time, as the Jews and Gentiles might grow together in one body. And if any ask, How can this be done? I answer, by the plain words of St. Paul, who writing to the Corinthians, plainly

affirmeth, that meats offered unto idols (which by the decree of the apostle are forbidden, as well as *is* blood,) are not to be abhorred, neither yet to be abstained from, for any other cause, but only for the conscience of him that shall admonish, that such things were offered into idols. "For his conscience' sake," saith the apostle, "thou shalt abstain; otherwise, thou mayest eat whatsoever is sold in the butchery." And to the Romans, he solemnly protesteth, and that by the Lord Jesus, that he assuredly knoweth, that nothing is common (that is, unclean and defiled,) by itself, but to him that esteemeth it unclean. And our Master and Saviour, Christ Jesus, the end of the law, and the accomplishment of all signs, doth deliver our conscience from all doubts, saying, "Not that which entereth by the mouth, defileth the man, but that which proceedeth from the heart." Hereof I suppose it is plain, that the precept to abstain from blood, given by the apostle, was temporary, and not perpetual; for otherwise the Holy Ghost, speaking often of the liberty of the Gentiles, would have restrained and excepted it, as he hath done scortation,<sup>1</sup> which in the same decree is expressed, and licentious and filthy communication, which the Gentiles esteemed none or small sins.

Touching Tithes, by the law of God they appertain to no priest, for now, we have no Levitical priesthood; but by law positive, gift, custom, they appertain to princes, and by their commandment, to men of kirk, as they will be termed. In their first donation, respect was had to another end, as their own law doth witness, than now is observed—For first, respect was had, that such as were accounted

<sup>1</sup> Fornication.



distributors of those things that were given to the kirkmen, should have their reasonable sustentation of the same, making just account of the rest, how it was to be bestowed upon the poor, the stranger, the widow, the fatherless, for whose relief, all such rents and duties were chiefly appointed to the kirk. Secondly, that provision should be made for the ministers of the kirk, that more freely, and without solicitude and care, they might attend upon their vocation, which was, to teach and instruct the people of God. And some respect was had to the repairing of the kirks, etc. Whereof no jot is at this day in the papacy rightly observed. The poor, we see altogether neglected by the bishops, proud prelates, and filthy clergy, who upon their own bellies, licence, and vanity, consume whatsoever was commanded to be bestowed upon the poor; they preach not truly and sincerely, but their lands, rents, and pompous prelacies are all they care, and set reckoning of.

## A SERMON,

PREACHED BY JOHN KNOX, MINISTER OF CHRIST JESUS,  
IN THE CHURCH OF EDINBURGH, UPON SUNDAY,  
AUGUST 19, 1565, FOR THE WHICH HE WAS FORBIDDEN  
TO PREACH FOR A SEASON.

The time is come that men cannot abide the sermon of truth, or whole-  
some doctrine.

## P R E F A C E.

JOHN KNOX, THE SERVANT OF JESUS CHRIST IN PREACHING OF  
HIS HOLY EVANGEL, TO THE BENEVOLENT READER DESIRETH  
GRACE AND PEACE, WITH THE SPIRIT OF RIGHTEOUS JUDG-  
MENT.

**W**ONDER not, Christian reader, that in all my  
study and travel within the Scriptures of God  
these twenty years, I have set forth nothing in ex-  
pounding any portion of Scripture, except this only  
rude and indigested sermon, preached by me in the  
public audience of the church of Edinburgh, the nine-  
teenth day of August, *Anno* 1565.

That I did not in writing communicate my judg-  
ment upon the Scriptures, I have ever thought myself  
to have most just reason. For considering myself  
rather called of my God to instruct the ignorant,  
comfort the sorrowful, confirm the weak, and rebuke  
the proud, by tongue and lively voice in these most  
corrupt days, than to compose books for the age to  
come; seeing that so much is written (and by men of  
most singular erudition) and yet so little well observed,  
I decreed to contain myself within the bounds of that

vocation whereunto I found myself especially called. I dare not deny (lest that in so doing, I should be injurious to the giver,) but that God hath revealed unto me secrets unknown to the world; and also, that he hath made my tongue a trumpet, to forewarn realms and nations; yea, certain great revelations of mutations and changes, when no such things were feared, nor yet were appearing; a portion whereof cannot the world deny (be it never so blind,) to be fulfilled, and the rest, alas! I fear shall follow, with greater haste, and in more full perfection than my sorrowful heart desireth. Notwithstanding these revelations and assurances, I did ever abstain to commit any thing to writing, contented only to have obeyed the charge of Him who commanded me to cry.

If any then will ask, to what purpose this only sermon is set forth, and greater matters omitted, I answer, To let such as Satan hath not altogether blinded see, upon how small occasions great offence is now conceived. This sermon is it for the which, from my bed, I was called before the Council; and after long reasoning, I was by some forbidden to preach in Edinburgh, so long as the king and queen were in town. This sermon is it that so offendeth such as would please the court, and will not appear to be enemies to the truth, yet they dare affirm, that I exceeded the bounds of God's messenger. I have therefore faithfully committed unto writing, whatsoever I could remember might have been offensive in that sermon, to the end, that as well the enemies of God's truth, as the professors of the same, may either note unto me wherein I have offended, or at the least, cease to condemn me, before they have convinced me by God's manifest word.

If any man think it easy unto me, to mitigate by my pen, the inconsiderate sharpness of my tongue, and so cannot men freely judge of that my sermon; I answer, that I am neither so impudent, that I will study to abuse the world in this great light, neither yet, so void of the fear of my God, that I will avow a lie in his own presence. And no less do I esteem it to be a lie, to deny or conceal that which in his name I have once pronounced, than to affirm, that God hath spoken, when his word assures me not of the same. For in the public place, I consult not with flesh and blood what I shall propose to the people; but as the Spirit of my God who hath sent me, and unto whom I must answer, moveth me, so I speak; and when I have once pronounced threatenings in his name (how unpleasant soever they be to the world,) I dare no more deny them, than I dare deny that God hath made me his messenger, to forewarn the inobedient of their assured destruction. At that sermon were auditors unto me, not only professors of the truth, and such as favour me, but rank Papists, dissembling hypocrites, and no small number of covetous claw-backs<sup>1</sup> of the new court. Now I will appeal to the conscience of them all, as they will answer in the presence of the eternal God, that either they bear me record now, writing the truth, or else note unto me the sentences offensive then by me pronounced, and now omitted in writing: for in God's presence I protest, that so far as memory would serve me, I have written more vehemently than in the action I spake and pronounced. But of purpose I have omitted persuasions and exhortations which then were made . . . . .  
[*Here something is wanting.*]

<sup>1</sup> Parasites.

## SERMON ON ISAIAH, XXVI, 13-20.

Verse 13. "*O Lord, our God, other lords besides thee have ruled us,*" etc.—As the cunning mariner, being master, having his ship tossed with vehement tempest and winds contrarious, is compelled oft to traverse, lest that either by too much resisting to the violence of the waves, his vessel might be overwhelmed; or by too much liberty granted to be carried whither the fury of the tempest would, his ship should be driven upon the shore, and so make shipwreck—even so doth our prophet Isaiah, in this text which presently ye have heard read. For he, foreseeing the great desolation that was decreed in the council of the Eternal against Jerusalem and Judah; to wit, that the whole people that bare the name of God should be dispersed; that the holy city should be destroyed; the temple, wherein was the ark of the covenant, and where God had promised to give his own presence, should be burnt with fire; the king taken, his sons in his own presence murdered, his own eyes immediately after to be put out; the nobility, some cruelly murdered, some shamefully led away captives; and finally, the whole seed of Abraham razed, as it were, from the face of the earth,—the prophet, I say, fearing these horrible calamities, doth as it were sometimes suffer himself, and the people committed to his charge, to be carried away with the violence of the tempest, without further resistance, than by pouring forth his and their dolorous complaints before the majesty of God; as in the 13th, 17th, and 18th verses of this present text we may read. At other times he valiantly resisteth the

desperate tempest, and pronounceth the fearful destruction of all such as trouble the church of God; which he pronounceth that God will multiply, even in such time as when it appeareth to be utterly exterminate. But because there is no final rest to the whole body, till the Head return to judgment, he calleth the afflicted to patience, and promiseth such a visitation, as whereby the wickedness of the wicked shall be disclosed, and finally recompensed in their own bosoms. These are the chiefest points which by the grace of God we intend more largely at this present to entreat.

First the prophet saith, ver. 13, "*O Lord, our God, other lords besides thee have ruled us.*"

This no doubt is the beginning of the dolorous complaint, in the which he first complaineth of the unjust tyranny that the poor afflicted Israelites sustained during the time of their captivity. True it is, that the prophet was gathered to his fathers in peace, before that this extremity apprehended the people. For an hundred years after his decease, was not the people led away captive. Yet he, foreseeing the assurance of the calamity, did beforehand indite unto them the complaint that afterwards they should make. But at the first sight it appeareth, that the complaint hath small weight. For what new thing was it, that other lords than God in his own person ruled them, seeing that such had been their regiment from the beginning? For who knoweth not, that Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, David, and other godly rulers, were men, and not God? And so, other lords than God ruled them in their greatest prosperity.

For the better understanding of this complaint, and of the mind of the prophet, we must First observe,

from whence all authority and dominion floweth; and Secondly, to what end powers are appointed of God. The which two points being discussed, we shall the better understand what lords and what authority rule beside God, and who are they in whom God and his merciful presence rules.

The first is resolved to us by the words of the apostle, saying, "There is no power but of God." David bringeth in the eternal God speaking to judges and rulers, saying, "I have said ye are gods, and the sons of the Most Highest." And Solomon, in the person of God, affirmeth the same, saying, "By me kings reign, and princes discern the things that are just. Of which places it is evident, that it is neither birth, influence of stars, election of people, force of arms, nor finally, whatsoever can be comprehended under the power of nature, that maketh the distinction betwixt the superior power and the inferior, or that doth establish the royal throne of kings; but it is the only and perfect ordinance of God, who willet his power, terror, and majesty, in a part to shine in the thrones of kings, and in the faces of his judges, and that, for the profit and comfort of man. So that whosoever would study to deface that order of regiment which God hath established, and by his holy word allowed, and bring in such a confusion, as no difference should be betwixt the upper powers and the subjects, doth nothing but evert and turn upside down the very throne of God, which he wills to be fixed here upon earth—as in the end and cause of this ordinance more plainly shall appear; which is the second point we have to observe, for the better understanding of the prophet's word and mind.

The end and cause, then, why God printeth in the

weak and feeble flesh of man this image of his own power and majesty, is not to puff up flesh in opinion of itself; neither yet, that the heart of him that is exalted above others, shall be lifted up by presumption and pride, and so despise others: but that he shall consider, that he is appointed lieutenant to One whose eyes continually watch upon him, to see and examine how he behaveth himself in his office. St. Paul in few words declareth the end wherefore the sword is committed to the powers, saying, it is "To the punishment of the wicked doers, and to the praise of such as do well." (Rom., xiii.) Of which words it is evident, that the sword of God is not committed to the hand of man, to use as it pleaseth him; but only, to punish vice, and maintain virtue, that men may live in such society as before God is acceptable. And this is the very and only cause why God hath appointed powers in this earth. For such is the furious rage of man's corrupt nature, that unless severe punishment were appointed, and put in execution upon malefactors, better it were that man should live among brute and wild beasts, than among men. But at this present, I dare not enter into the description of this common-place, for so should I not satisfy the text, which by God's grace I purpose to absolve.<sup>1</sup> This only by the way I would, that such as are placed in authority, should consider, whether they reign and rule by God, so that God ruleth them; or, if they rule without, besides, and against God; of whom our prophet here doth complain.

If any lust to take trial of this point, it is not hard; for Moses in the election of judges, and of a king, describeth not only what persons shall be chosen to

<sup>1</sup> Open up.



that honour, but doth also give to him that is elected and chosen, the rule, by the which he shall try himself whether God reign in him or not; saying, "When he shall sit upon the throne of his kingdom, he shall write to himself an exemplar of this law in a book, by the priests the Levites: it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, and to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, that he may do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left." (Deut., xvii.) The same is repeated to Joshua, in his inauguration to the government of the people, by God himself, saying, "Let not the book of this law depart from thy mouth, but meditate in it day and night, that thou mayest keep and do all that which is written in it. For then shall thy way be prosperous, and thou shalt do prudently." (Josh., i.)

The First thing then that God craveth of him that is called to the honour of a king, is, the knowledge of His will revealed in his word: the Second, is an upright and willing mind to put in execution such things as God commandeth in his law, without declining either to the right hand or the left.

Kings then have not an absolute power to do in their regiment what pleaseth them; but their power is limited by God's word. So that if they strike where God commandeth not, they are but murderers; and if they spare, where God commandeth to strike, they and their throne are criminal, and guilty of the wickedness that aboundeth upon the face of the earth for lack of punishment. Oh, if kings and princes would consider what account shall be craved of them,

as well of their ignorance and misknowledge of God's will, as for the neglecting of their office!

But now, to return to the words of the prophet:— In the person of the whole people, he doth complain unto God, that the Babylonians (whom he calleth other lords besides God, both because of their ignorance of God, and by reason of their cruelty and inhumanity,) had long ruled over them in all rigour, without pity or compassion had upon the ancient men, and famous matrons. For they being mortal enemies of the people of God, sought by all means to aggravate their yoke, yea, utterly to have exterminate the memory of them and of their religion from the face of the earth.

After the first part of this dolorous complaint, the prophet declareth the protestation of the people, saying, “Nevertheless, only in thee shall we remember thy name.” Others read it, “But we will remember thee only, *and* thy name;” but in the Hebrew, there is no conjunction copulative in that sentence. The mind of the prophet is plain, to wit, that notwithstanding the long sustained affliction, the people of God declined not to a false and vain religion, but remembered God, that sometime appeared to them in his merciful presence; which albeit then they saw not, yet would they still remember his name, that is, they would call to mind the doctrine and promise which sometimes they heard, albeit in their prosperity they did not sufficiently glorify God, who so mercifully ruled in the midst of them. The temptation, no doubt, of the whole Israelites, was great in those days. They were carried captives from the land of Canaan, which was to them the gage and pledge of God's favour towards them; for it was the inheritance that God promised

to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. The league and covenant of God's protection appeared to have been broken. They lamentably complain, that they saw not their accustomed signs of God's merciful presence. The true prophets were few, and the abominations used in Babylon were exceeding many. And so, it might have appeared to them, that in vain it was that they were called the posterity of Abraham, or that ever they had received law, or form of right religion from God. That we may the better feel it in ourselves, the temptation, I say, was even such, as if God should utterly destroy all order and policy that this day is within his church; that the true preaching of the word should be suppressed, the right use of sacraments abolished, idolatry and papistical abominations erected up again; and therewith, that our bodies should be taken prisoners by Turks, or other manifest enemies of God, and of all godliness. Such, I say, was their temptation. How notable then is this their confession that in bondage they make; to wit, that they will remember God only; albeit he hath appeared to turn his face from them, they will remember his name, and will call to mind the deliverance promised.

Hereof have we to consider, what is our duty, if God bring us (as for our offences and unthankfulness justly he may,) to the like extremity. This confession is not the fair flattering words of hypocrites, lying and bathing in their pleasures; but it is the mighty operation of the Spirit of God, who leaveth not his own destitute of some comfort, in their most desperate calamities. This is then our duty, not only to confess our God in the time of peace and quietness, but he chiefly craveth, that we avow him in the midst of

his and our enemies. And this is not [in us] to do; but it behoveth, that the Spirit of God work in us, above all power of nature. And thus we ought earnestly to meditate, before the battle rise more vehement which appeareth not to be far off.

But now, must we enter in somewhat more deeply to consider these judgments of God. This people entreated as we have heard, was the only people upon the face of the earth, to whom God was rightly known: among them only were his laws, statutes, ordinances, and sacrifices used, and put in practice. They only invoked His name, and to them alone had he promised his protection and assistance. What then should be the cause, that he should give them over into this great reproach, and bring them into such extremity, as that his own name in them should be blasphemed? The prophet Ezekiel, that saw this horrible destruction forespoken by Isaiah put in just execution, giveth an answer in these words, "I gave unto them laws that were good, in the which, whosoever should walk, should live in them. But they would not walk in my ways, but rebelled against me; and therefore I have given unto them laws that are not good, and judgments, in the which they shall not live." (Ezek., xx.) The writers of the books of Kings and Chronicles declare this in more plain words, saying, The Lord sent unto them his prophets rising early, desiring of them to return unto the Lord, and to amend their wicked ways, (for he would have spared his people and his tabernacle:) but they mocked his servants, and would not return unto the Lord their God, to walk in his ways. Yea, Judah itself kept not the precepts of the Lord God, but walked in the manners and ordinances of Israel, that is, of such as

then had declined to idolatry, from the days of Jeroboam. And therefore, the Lord God abhorred the whole seed of Israel, that is, the whole body of the people; he promised them and gave them into the hands of those that spoiled them, and so, he cast them out from his presence.

Hereof it is evident, that their stubborn disobedience unto God, and unto the voices of his prophets, was the cause of their destruction. Now, have we to take heed how we should use the good laws of God; that is, his merciful will revealed unto us in his word, and that order of justice that by him, for the comfort of man, is established among men. It is no doubt, but that obedience is the most acceptable sacrifice unto God, and that which above all things he requireth: that when he manifesteth himself by his word, that men follow, according to their vocation and commandment. Now, so it is, that God by that great Pastor, our Lord Jesus, now manifestly in his word calleth us from all impiety, as well of body, as of mind, to holiness of life, and to his spiritual service. And for this purpose, He hath erected the throne of his mercy among us, the true preaching of his word, together with the right administration of his sacraments. But what is our obedience? Let every man examine his own conscience, and consider what statutes and laws we would have to be given unto us.

Wouldst thou, O Scotland, have a king to reign over thee in justice, equity, and mercy?—subject thou thyself to the Lord thy God, obey his commandments, and magnify thou that word that calleth unto thee, “This is the way, walk into it.” And if thou wilt not, flatter not thyself: the same justice remaineth this day in God to punish thee, Scotland, and thee, Edin-

burgh in especial, that before punished the land of Judah, and the city of Jerusalem. "Every realm or nation (saith the prophet Jeremiah,) that likewise offendeth, shall be likewise punished." But if thou shalt see impiety placed in the seat of justice above thee, so that in the throne of God (as Solomon doth complain, Eccles., iii,) reigneth nothing but fraud and violence, accuse thy own ingratitude and rebellion against God. For that is the only cause why God taketh away (as the same prophet in another place doth speak,) the strong man and the man of war, the judge and the prophet, the prudent and the aged, the captain and the honourable, the counsellor and the cunning artificer. And I will appoint, saith the Lord, children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. Children are extortioners of my people, and women have rule over them. (Isa., iii.) If these calamities, I say, apprehend us, so that we see nothing but the oppression of good men, and of all godliness, and wicked men without God to reign above us, let us accuse and condemn ourselves, as the only cause of our own miseries. For if we had heard the voice of the Lord our God, and given upright obedience to the same, God should have blessed us, he should have multiplied our peace, and should have rewarded our obedience before the eyes of the world.

But now, let us hear what the prophet saith further. Ver. 14.—*"The dead shall not live (saith he,) neither shall the tyrants, or the dead arise, because Thou hast visited and scattered them, and destroyed all their memory."*

From this 14th verse, unto the end of the 19th, it appeareth, that the prophet observeth no order; yea, that he speaketh things directly repugning one to

another. For first he saith, "The dead shall not live;" after, he affirmeth, "Thy dead men shall live." Secondly, he saith (ver. 15), "Thou hast visited and scattered them, and destroyed all their memory:" Immediately thereafter he saith, "Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation. They have visited thee, and have poured forth a prayer before thee." Who, I say, would not think that these are things not only spoken forth of good order and purpose, but also, manifestly repugning one to another? For to live, and not to live; to be so destroyed that no memorial remaineth, and to be so increased, that the coasts of the earth shall be replenished, seem to import plain contradiction.

For removing of this doubt, and for better understanding of the prophet's mind, we must understand that the prophet had to do with diverse sorts of men. He had to do with the conjured and manifest enemies of God's people, the Chaldeans or Babylonians, even as such as profess Christ Jesus, have to do with the Turk and Saracens. He had to do with the seed of Abraham, whereof there were three sorts. The ten tribes all degenerate from the true worshipping, and corrupted with idolatry, as at this day are our pestilent Papists in all realms and nations, there rested only the tribe of Judah, and Jerusalem, where the form of true religion was observed, the law taught, and ordinances of God outwardly kept. But yet there were in that body (I mean, in the bosom of the visible church,) a great number that were hypocrites, as at this day are yet among us, that profess the Lord Jesus, and have refused payistry; not a few that were licentious livers; some that had turned their back to God, that is, had forsaken all true religion; and some

that lived a most abominable life, as Ezekiel saith in his vision. (Ezek., viii.) And yet, there were some godly, as a few wheat-corns oppressed and hid among the multitude of such chaff. Now, according to this diversity, the prophet keepeth diverse purposes, and yet in most perfect order.

And first, after the first part of the complaint of the afflicted, as we have heard, in vehemency of spirit he bursteth forth against all the proud enemies of God's people, all such as trouble them, and against all such as mock and forsake God; and saith, "The dead shall not live, the proud giants shall not arise; thou hast scattered them, and destroyed their memorial." In which words, he fighteth against the present temptation, and dolorous estate of God's people, and against the insolent pride of such as oppressed them: as the prophet should say, O ye troublers of God's people, howsoever it appeareth to you in this your bloody rage, that God regardeth not your cruelty, nor considereth not what violence ye do to his poor afflicted, yet shall ye be visited, yea, and your carcases shall fall, and lie as stinking carrion upon the face of the earth: ye shall fall without hope of life, or of a blessed resurrection. Yea, however ye gather your substance, and augment families, ye shall be so scattered, that ye shall leave no memorial of you to the posterities to come, but that which shall be execrable and odious.

Hereof have the tyrants their admonition, and the afflicted church inestimable comfort. The tyrants that now do oppress, shall receive the same end as they which have passed before; that is, they shall die, and fall with shame, without hope of resurrection, as is aforesaid: not that they shall not arise to their



own confusion, and just condemnation; but that they shall not recover power to trouble the servants of God, neither yet shall the wicked arise, as David saith, in the counsel of the just. Now have the wicked their counsels, their thrones, and final handling, for the most part, of all things that are upon the face of the earth; but the poor servants of God are reputed unworthy of men's presence, yea, they are more vile before these proud tyrants, than is very dirt and mire that is trodden under foot. But in that glorious resurrection this estate shall be changed. For then shall such as now by their abominable living and cruelty destroy the earth, and molest God's children, see Him whom they have pierced. (Rev., i.) They shall see the glory of such as now they persecute, to their terror and everlasting confusion. The remembrance hereof ought to make us patient in the days of affliction, and so to comfort us, that when we see tyrants in their blind rage tread under foot the saints of God, that utterly we despair not, as if there were neither wisdom, justice, nor power above in the heavens, to repress such tyranny, and to redress the dolours of the unjustly afflicted. No, brethren; let us be assured, that the right hand of the Lord will change the state of things that be most desperate. In our God there is wisdom and power, in a moment to change the joy and mirth of our enemies into everlasting mourning, and our sorrows into joy and gladness that shall have no end.

Let us therefore in these apparent calamities—and marvel not that I say calamities *apparent*, for he that seeth not a fire begun, that shall burn more than we look for, unless God of his mercy quench it, is more than blind—yet, I say, let us not be discouraged; but

with unfeigned repentance let us return to the Lord our God; let us accuse and condemn our former negligence, and steadfastly depend upon his promised deliverance; and so shall our temporal sorrows be converted into joy everlasting.

The doubt that might be moved concerning the destruction of those whom God exalteth, shall be discussed, if time will suffer, after we have passed through the text. Now proceedeth the prophet, and saith, Ver. 15. *"Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation; thou art made glorious; thou hast enlarged all the coasts of the earth."* 16. *"Lord, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them."*

In these words, the prophet giveth consolation to the afflicted, assuring them, that how horrible soever that desolation should be, yet should the seed of Abraham be so multiplied, that it should replenish the coasts of the earth; yea, that God should be more glorified in their dispersion, than he was during the time of their prosperity. This promise, no doubt, was incredible, when it was made. For who could have been persuaded, that the destruction of Jerusalem should have been the means, whereby the nation of the Jews should have been increased, seeing that much rather it appeared, that the overthrow of Jerusalem, should have been the very abolishing of the seed of Abraham? But we must consider, to what end it was that God revealed himself to Abraham; and what is contained in the promise of the multiplication of his seed, and of the benediction promised thereto.

First, God revealed himself to Abraham, and that by the means of his word, to let all flesh after under-

stand, that without God first call man, and reveal himself unto him, that flesh can do nothing but rebel against God. For Abraham, no doubt, was an idolater, before God called him from Ur of the Chaldees. (Josh., xxiv.) The promise was made, that the seed of Abraham should be multiplied as the stars of heaven, and as the sand of the sea; which is not simply to be understood of his natural seed, although it was sometimes greatly increased; but rather, of such as should become the spiritual seed of Abraham, as the apostle speaketh. (Rom., ix.) Now, if we be able to prove, that the right knowledge of God, his wisdom, justice, mercy, and power, were more amply declared in their captivity, than ever it was at any time before, then can we not deny, but that God, even when to man's judgment he had utterly razed them from the face of the earth, did increase the nation of the Jews, so that he was glorified in them, and did extend the coasts of the earth for their habitation. And for the better understanding hereof, let us shortly try the histories, from their captivity to their deliverance, and after the same, to the coming of the Messiah. It is no doubt but that Satan intended, by the dispersion of the Jews, so to have profaned the whole seed of Abraham, that among them should neither have remained the true knowledge of God, nor yet the spirit of sanctification, but that all should have come to a like ignorance, and contempt of God. For I pray you, for what purpose was it, that Daniel and his fellows were taken into the king's court; were commanded to be fed at the king's table, and were put to the schools of their divines, soothsayers, and astrologers? It may be thought, that it proceeded from the king's humanity, and of a zeal that he had

that they should be brought up in virtue and good learning; and I doubt not but it was so understood of a great number of the Jews. But the secret practice of the devil was understood of Daniel, when he refused to defile himself with the king's meat, which was forbidden to the seed of Abraham in the law of their God. (Dan., i.)

Well, God beginneth shortly thereafter, to show himself mindful of his promise made by his prophet; and he beginneth to trouble Nebuchadnezzar himself, by showing to him a vision in his dream; which did the more trouble him, because he could not forget the terror of it, neither yet could he remember what the vision, and the parcels thereof were. Whereupon were called all diviners, interpreters of dreams, and soothsayers, of whom the king demanded, if they could let him understand what he had dreamed. But while they answer, that such a question used not to be demanded of any soothsayer or magician, for the resolution thereof appertained only to the gods, whose habitation was not with men, the charge was given, that they all should be slain; and amongst the rest, Daniel was sought, (whose innocence the devil most envied,) to have suffered the same judgment. He claimeth, and asketh time to disclose that secret; (I only touch the history, to let you see by what means God increaseth his knowledge:) which being granted, the vision is revealed unto him. He showeth the same to the king, with the true interpretation of it; adding, that the knowledge thereof came not from the stars, but only from the God of Abraham, who only was, and is, the true God. Which thing being understood, the king burst forth in his confession, saying, "Of a truth, your God is the most excellent of

all gods : and he is Lord of kings, and only he that revealeth the secrets, seeing that thou couldst open this secret." (Dan., ii.)

And when the king after, puffed up in pride, by the counsel of his wicked nobility, would make an image, before the which he would that all tongues and nations subject to him should make adoration ; and that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not obey his unjust commandment, and so, were cast in the flaming furnace of fire, and yet, by God's angels were so preserved, that no smell of fire remained on their persons nor garments, this same king giveth a more notable confession, saying, "The Lord God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, is to be praised, who hath sent his angels, and delivered his worshippers that put their trust in him, who have done against the king's commandment ; who have rather given their own bodies to torment, than that they should worship another god except their own God. By me therefore is there made a decree, that whosoever shall blaspheme the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that he shall be cut in pieces, and his house shall be made detestable."

Thus we see how God began, even almost in the beginning of their captivity, to notify his name, to multiply his knowledge, and set forth as well his power, as his wisdom and true worshipping, by those that were taken prisoners ; yea, that were despised, and of all men contemned ; so that the name and fear of the God of Abraham was never before notified to so many realms and nations. This wondrous work of God proceeded from one empire to another. For Daniel being promoted to great honour by Darius, king of the Persians and Medes, falleth into a desperate

danger ; for he was committed to prison among lions, because that he was deprehended breaking the king's injunction—not that the king desired the destruction of God's servants, but because the corrupt idolaters that in hatred of Daniel had procured this law to be made, urged the king against his nature. But God by his angel did stop the lions' mouths, and so, preserved his servant. Which considered, with the sudden destruction of Daniel's enemies by the same lions, King Darius, besides his own confession wrote to all people, tongues, and nations after this form : “ It is decreed by me, that in all the dominions of my kingdom, men shall fear and reverence the God of Daniel, because He is the living God, abiding for ever, whose kingdom shall not be destroyed, and his dominion remaineth : who saveth and delivereth, and showeth signs and wonders in heaven and in earth ; who hath delivered Daniel from the lions.” (Dan., vi.)

This knowledge was yet further increased in the days of Cyrus, who giving freedom to the captives to return to their own native country, giveth this confession : “ Thus saith Cyrus, the king of Persians : All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given unto me, and hath commanded me, that a house be built to him in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever therefore of you that are of his people, let the Lord his God be with him, and let him pass up to Jerusalem, and let him build the house of the Lord God of Israel ; for He only is God that is in Jerusalem.” (Ezra, i.) Time will not suffer to entreat the points of this confession, neither yet did I for that purpose adduce the history ; but only, to let us see how constantly God kept his promise, in increasing of his people, and in augmenting of his true knowledge.

When that both they that were the seed of Abraham, and that religion which they professed, appeared utterly to have been extinguished, above men's expectation, I say, He brought freedom out of bondage, light out of darkness, and life out of death. I am not ignorant, that the building of the temple, and reparation of the walls of Jerusalem, were long stayed, so that the work had many enemies. But so did the hand of God prevail in the end, that a decree was given by Darius, (by him I suppose that succeeded to Cambyzes) not only that all things necessary for the building of the temple, and for the sacrifices that were to be there burnt should be ministered upon the king's charges, but also, that whosoever should hinder that work, or change that decree, that a balk<sup>1</sup> should be taken out of his house, and that he should be hanged thereupon; yea, that his house should be made a dunghill. And thereto he addeth a prayer, saying, "The God of heaven who hath placed his name there, root out every king and people (oh that kings and nations should understand!) that shall put his hand either to change, or to hurt this house of God that is in Jerusalem." (Ezra, vi.) And so, in despite of Satan, was the temple builded, the walls repaired, and the city inhabited; and in the most desperate dangers it was preserved, till that the Messiah promised, the glory of the second temple, came, manifested himself to the world, suffered and rose again according to the Scriptures; and so, by sending forth his gospel from Jerusalem, did replenish the whole earth with the true knowledge of God. And thus did God in perfection increase the nation and the spiritual seed of Abraham.

<sup>1</sup> Beam.

Wherefore, dear brethren, we have no small consolation if the state of all things be this day rightly considered. We see in what fury and rage the world for the most part is now raised against the poor church of Jesus Christ, unto the which he hath proclaimed liberty, after this fearful bondage of that spiritual Babylon, in the which we have been holden captives of longer space than Israel was prisoner in Babylon itself. For if we shall consider, upon the one part, the multitude of those that live without God, and upon the other part, the blind rage of the pestilent Papists, what shall we think of the small number of them that do profess Christ Jesus, but that they are as a poor sheep, already seized in the claws of the lion; yea, that they, and the true religion which they profess, shall in a moment utterly be consumed? But against this fearful temptation, let us be armed with the promise of our God, to wit, that he will be the protector of his church, yea, that he will multiply it, even when to man's judgment it appeareth to be utterly exterminate. This promise hath our God performed in the multiplication of Abraham's seed; in preservation of it when Satan laboured to have utterly destroyed it; in deliverance of the same, as we have heard, from Babylon. He hath sent his Son, Christ Jesus, clad in our flesh, who hath tasted of all our infirmities, (sin excepted;) who hath promised to be with us to the end of the world. He hath further kept promise in the publication, yea, in the restitution of his glorious gospel. Shall we then think, that he will leave his church destitute, in this most dangerous age? Only let us stick to his truth, and study to conform our lives to the same, and he shall multiply his knowledge, and increase his people.



Now, let us hear what the prophet saith more:—  
Ver. 16. *“Lord, in trouble have they visited thee ; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them.”*

The prophet meaneth, that such as in the time of quietness did not rightly regard God, nor his judgments, were compelled by sharp corrections to seek God, yea, by cries and dolorous complaints to visit him. True it is, that such obedience deserveth small praise before men : for who can praise, or accept that in good part, which cometh, as it were, of mere compulsion ? And yet, rare it is that any of God's children do give unfeigned obedience, until the hand of God turn them. For if quietness and prosperity make them not utterly to forget their duty both towards God and man, as David for a season, yet it maketh them careless, insolent, and in many things unmindful of those things that God chiefly craveth of them ; which imperfection espied, and the danger that thereof might ensue, our heavenly Father visiteth the sins of his children, but in the rod of his mercy ; by which they are moved to return to their God, to accuse their former negligence, and to promise better obedience in all times thereafter ; as David confesseth, saying, “Before I fell in affliction, I went astray, but now, will I keep thy statutes.” (Psalm cxix.)

But yet, for the better understanding of the prophet's mind, we may consider, how God doth visit man, and how man doth visit God ; and what difference there is, betwixt the visitation of God upon the reprobate, and his visitation upon the chosen.

God sometimes visiteth the reprobate in his hot displeasure, pouring upon them his plagues, for their long rebellion ; as we have heard before, that He

visited the proud, and destroyed their memory. Other times, God is said to visit his people being in affliction, to whom he sendeth comfort or promise of deliverance; as he did visit the seed of Abraham, being oppressed in Egypt. And Zachariah saith, that God had visited his people, and sent unto them hope of deliverance, when John the Baptist was born. But of none of these visitations, speaketh our prophet here; but of that only which we have already touched, to wit, when that God layeth his correction upon his own children, to call them from the venomous breasts of this corrupt world, that they suck not in over great abundance the poison thereof—and doth as it were wean them from their mother's paps, that they may learn to receive other nourishment. True it is, that this weaning (or *speaning*, as we term it,) from worldly pleasure, is a thing strange to the flesh: and yet it is a thing so necessary to God's children, that unless they be weaned from the pleasures of the world, they can never feed upon that delectable milk of God's eternal verity. For the corruption of the one doth either hinder the other to be received, or else, so troubleth the whole powers of man, that the soul can never so digest the truth of God as that he ought to do.

Albeit this appeareth hard, yet it is most evident. For what liquor can we receive from the breasts of the world, but that which is in the world? And what that is, the apostle John teacheth, saying, "Whatsoever is in the world, is either the lusts of the eyes, the lusts of the flesh, or the pride of life," (1 John, ii.) Now, seeing that these are not of the Father, but of the world, how can it be, that our souls can feed upon chastity, temperance, and humility, so

long as that our stomachs are replenished with the corruption of these vices? Now, so it is, that willingly flesh can never refuse these forenamed, but rather still delighteth itself in every one of them, yea, in them all, as the examples are but too evident. It behoveth therefore, that God himself shall violently pull his children from these venomous breasts, that when they lack the liquor and poison of the one, they may visit him, and learn to be nourished of him. Oh, if the eyes of worldly princes should be opened, that they might see with what humour and liquor their souls are fed, while their whole delight consisteth in pride, ambition, and lusts of the stinking flesh!

We understand then, how God doth visit men, as well by his severe judgments, as by his merciful visitation of deliverance from trouble, or by bringing trouble upon his chosen, for their humiliation. And now, it resteth to understand, how man visiteth God. Man doth visit God, when he appeareth in his presence, be it to the hearing of his Word, or to the participation of his Sacraments; as the people of Israel, besides the observation of their Sabbaths and daily oblations, were commanded thrice a year to present themselves before the presence of the tabernacle; and as we do, as often as we present ourselves to the hearing of the Word. For there is the footstool, yea, there is the face and throne of God himself, wheresoever the Gospel of Jesus Christ is truly preached, and his sacraments rightly ministered.

But men may on this sort visit God hypocritically: for they may come for the fashion; they may hear with deaf ears, yea, they may understand, and yet never determine with themselves to obey that which God requireth. And let such men be assured, that

He who searcheth the secrets of all hearts, will be avenged of all such. For nothing can be to God more odious, than to mock him in his own presence. Let every man therefore examine himself, with what mind, and what purpose he cometh, to hear the Word of God; yea, with what ear he heareth it, and what testimony his heart giveth him, when that God commandeth virtue, and forbiddeth impiety. Repinest thou, when God requireth obedience? thou hearest to thine own condemnation. Mockest thou at God's threatenings? thou shalt feel the weight and truth of them, albeit too late, when flesh and blood cannot deliver thee from his hand.

But the visitation whereof our prophet speaketh, is only proper to the sons of God, who in the time when God taketh from them the pleasures of the world, or showeth his angry countenance unto them, have their recourse unto him, and confessing their former negligence, with troubled hearts cry for his mercy. This visitation is not proper to all afflicted, but appertaineth only to God's children; for the reprobate can never have access to God's mercy in time of their tribulation, and that, because they abuse, as well his long patience, as the manifold benefits they receive from his hands. For as the same prophet heretofore saith, "Let the wicked obtain mercy, yet shall he never learn wisdom; but in the land of righteousness (that is, where the true knowledge of God aboundeth,) he will do wickedly;" which is a crime above all others abominable. For to what end is it, that God erecteth his throne among us, but that we should fear him? Why doth He reveal his holy will unto us, but that we should obey it? Why doth He deliver us from trouble, but that we should be witnesses unto the

world, that he is gracious and merciful? Now, when men hearing their duty, and knowing what God requires of them, do malapertly fight against all equity and justice, what I pray you do they else, but make manifest war against God; yea, when they have received from God such deliverance, that they cannot deny, but that God himself hath in his great mercy visited them; and yet they continue wicked even as before? What deserve they, but effectually to be given over unto a reprobate sense, that headlong they may run to ruin both of body and soul. It is almost incredible, that man should be so enraged against God, that neither his plagues, nor yet his mercy showed, should move them to repentance, but because the Scriptures bear witness of the one and the other. Let us cease to marvel, and let us firmly believe, that such things as have been, are even presently before our eyes, although many, blinded by affection, cannot see them.

Ahab (as in the book of Kings it is written) received many notable benefits of the hand of God, who did visit him in diverse sorts; sometimes by his plagues, sometimes by his word, and sometimes by his merciful deliverance. He made him king, and for the idolatry used by him and his wife, He plagued all Israel by famine. He revealed to him his will and true religion, by the prophet Elijah; he gave to him sundry deliverances; but one most special, when proud Benhadad came to besiege Samaria, and was not content to receive Ahab's gold, silver, sons, daughters, and wives, but also required, that his servants should have whatsoever was delectable in Samaria. True it is, that his elders and people willed him not to hear the proud tyrant. But who made to

him the promise of deliverance? and who appointed, and put his army in order? who assured him of victory? The prophet of God only, who assured him, that by the servants of the princes of the provinces, who in number were only two hundred, thirty and two, he should deface that great army, in the which there were two and thirty kings, with all their forces. And as the prophet of God promised, so it came to pass. Victory was obtained, not once only, but twice, and that by the merciful visitation of the Lord.

But how did Ahab visit God again, for his great benefit received? Did he remove his idolatry? did he correct his idolatrous wife Jezebel? No, we find no such thing; but the one and the other we find to have continued, and increased in former impiety. But what was the end hereof? The last visitation of God was, that dogs licked the blood of the one, and did eat the flesh of the other.

In few words, then, we may understand, what difference there is betwixt the visitation of God upon the reprobate, and his visitation upon his chosen. The reprobate are visited, but never truly humbled, nor yet amended. The chosen being visited, they sob, and they cry unto God for mercy; which obtained, they magnify God's name, and after declare the fruits of repentance. Let us therefore that hear these judgments of our God, call for the assistance of his Holy Spirit, that howsoever it pleaseth him to visit us, that we may stoop under his merciful hands, and unfeignedly cry to him when he correcteth us; and so, shall we know in experience, that our cries and complaints were not in vain.

But let us hear what the prophet saith further: Ver. 17. "*Like as a woman with child, that draweth*

*near to the travail, is in sorrow, and crieth in her pains, so have we been in thy sight, O Lord: we have conceived, we have borne in vain, as though we should have brought forth the wind."* 18. "*Salvations were not made to the earth, neither did the inhabitants of the earth fall.*"

This is the second part of the prophet's complaint, in the which he, in the person of God's people, complaineth, that of their great affliction there appeared no end. This same similitude is used by our Master, Jesus Christ; for when he speaketh of the troubles of his church, he compareth them to the pains of a woman travailing in her child-birth, (John, xvi;) but it is to another end. For there he promiseth exceeding and permanent joy, after a sort, though it appear trouble. But here, is the trouble long and vehement, albeit the fruit of it was not suddenly espied. He speaketh no doubt of that long and dolorous time of their captivity, in the which they continually travailed for deliverance, but obtained it not, before the complete end of seventy years; during the which time, the earth, that is, the land of Judah, which sometimes was sanctified unto God, but was then given to be profaned by wicked people, got no help, nor perceived any deliverance. For the inhabitants of the world fell not—that is, the tyrants and oppressors of God's people were not taken away, but still remained, and continued blasphemers of God, and troublers of his church. But because I perceive the hours to pass more swiftly than they have done at other times, I mind to contract that which resteth of this text into certain points.

In verses 19th and 20th, the prophet first fighteth against the present desperation; after, he introduceth

God himself calling upon his people; and last of all, he assureth his afflicted, that God will come, and require account of all the blood-thirsty tyrants of the earth.

First, fighting against the present desperation, he saith, Ver. 19. "*Thy dead shall live, even my body, (or with my body shall they arise :) Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs.*"

The prophet here pierceth through all impediments that nature could object, and by the victory of faith he overcometh, not only the common enemies, but the great and last enemy of all, to wit, death itself. For thus would he say, Lord, I see nothing to thy chosen, but misery to follow misery, and one affliction to succeed another; yea, in the end, I see that death shall devour thy dearest children. But yet, O Lord, I see thy promise to be true, and thy love to remain towards thy chosen, even when death appeareth to have devoured them. For thy dead shall live, yea, not only shall they live, but my very dead carcase shall arise. And so, I see honour and glory to succeed this temporal shame. I see joy permanent to come after trouble, order to spring out of this terrible confusion; and finally, I see, that life shall devour death, so that death shall be destroyed; and so, thy servants shall have life.

This, I say, is the victory of faith, when in the midst of death, throughout the light of God's word the afflicted see life. Hypocrites in the time of quietness and prosperity can generally confess, that God is true in his promises. But bring them to the extremity, and there ceaseth the hypocrite further to trust in God, than he seeth natural means whereby



God useth to work. But the true faithful, when all hope of natural means faileth, then fly they to God himself, and to the truth of his promise who is above nature, yea, whose works are not so subject to the ordinary course of nature, that when nature faileth, his power and promise also therewith fail.

Let us further observe, that the prophet here speaketh not of all dead in general, but saith, "Thy dead, O Lord, shall live;" in which words, he maketh difference betwixt those that die in the Lord, and those that die in their natural corruption, and in old Adam. Die in the Lord can none, except those that live in him—I mean, of those that attain to the years of discretion—and none can live in him, except those that with the apostle can say, "I live; not I, but Christ Jesus liveth in me. The life that now I live, I have by the faith of the Son of God." (Galat., ii.) Not that I mean, that the faithful have at all hours such sense of the life everlasting, that they fear not the death, and the troubles of this life. No, not so, for the faith of all God's children is weak, yea, and in many things imperfect. But I mean, that such as in death, and after death, shall live, must communicate in this life with Jesus Christ, and must be regenerated by the seed of life, that is, by the word of the living and everlasting God; which whosoever despiseth, refuseth life, and joy everlasting. (1 Pet., i.) The prophet transferreth all the promises of God to himself, saying, "Even *my* dead body shall arise." And immediately after, he giveth commandment and charge to the dwellers in the dust, that is, to the dead carcases of those that were departed—for the spirit and soul of man dwelleth not in the dust—that they should awake, they should sing and rejoice;

for they should arise, and spring up from the earth, even as do the herbs, after they have received the dew from above.

Time will not suffer that these particulars be so largely entreated as they merit, and as I gladly would. And therefore let us first consider, that the prophet in transferring the power and promise of God to himself, doth not vindicate to himself any particular prerogative above the people of God, as that he alone should live and arise, and not they also. But he does it to let them understand, that he taught a doctrine whereof he was certain, yea, and whereof they should have experience, after his death. As he should say, My words appear to you now to be incredible. But the day shall come, that I shall be taken from you; my carcase shall be inclosed in the bosom of the earth, and therefore, shall ye be led away captives to Babylon, where ye shall remain many days and years, as it were, buried in your sepulchres. But then, call to mind that I said unto you beforehand, that my body shall arise. Even so shall ye rise from your graves out of Babylon, and be restored to your own country, and city of Jerusalem.—This I doubt not is the true meaning of the prophet. The charge that he giveth to the dwellers in the dust is, to express the power of God's word, whereby He not only giveth life where death apparently had prevailed, but also, by it, He calleth things that are not, even as if they were. True it is, that the prophet Isaiah saw not the destruction of Jerusalem, much less, could he see the restitution of it, with his corporal eyes. But he leaveth this, as it were, in testament with them, that when they were in the extremity of all bondage, they should call to mind what the prophet of God had before spoken.

And lest that his doctrine, and this promise of God made unto them by his mouth, should have been forgotten—as we are ever prone and ready to forget God's promises, when we are pressed with any sorrow—God raised up unto them, in the midst of calamity, his prophet Ezekiel, unto whom, among many other visions, he gave this: the hand of the Lord first led him into a place which was full of dry and dispersed bones. The question was demanded of the prophet, if these bones, being wondrous dry, should live? The prophet answered, the knowledge thereof appertained unto God. Charge was given unto him, that he should speak unto the dry bones, and say, "Thus saith the Lord God to these bones, Behold, I shall give you breath, and ye shall live; I shall give unto you sinews, flesh, and skin, and ye shall live." And while the prophet spake as he was commanded, he heard a voice, and he saw every bone joined to its marrow;<sup>1</sup> he saw them covered with flesh and skin, albeit there was no spirit of life in them. He was commanded again to speak, and to say, "Thus saith the Lord God. Come, O Spirit, from the four quarters, and blow into these that are slain, that they may live"—and as he prophesied, the spirit of life came, they lived, and stood upon their feet. Now doth the Lord interpret what this vision meant, saying, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold they say, Our bones are dried, our hope is perished, we are plainly cut off. But behold, saith the Lord, I will open your graves, I will bring you forth from them, ye shall live, and come unto the land of Israel, and ye shall know that I am the Lord." (Ezek., xxxvii.)

This vision, I say, given to the prophet, and by the prophet preached to the people, when they thought

<sup>1</sup> Fellow, companion.

that God had utterly forgotten them, compelled them more diligently to advert what the former prophets had spoken. It is no doubt but that they carried with them both the prophecy of Isaiah and Jeremiah, so that the prophet Ezekiel is a commentary to these words of Isaiah, where he saith, "Thy dead, O Lord, shall live; with my body they shall arise." The prophet bringeth in this similitude of the dead, to answer unto that part of their fidelity, who can believe no further of God's promises, than they are able to apprehend by natural judgment. As he would say, Think ye this impossible, that God shall give life unto you, and bring you to an estate of a commonwealth again, after ye are dead, and as it were, razed from the face of the earth? But why do ye not consider, what God worketh from year to year, in the order of nature? Sometimes ye see the face of the earth decked and beautified with herbs, flowers, grass, and fruits. Again, ye see the same utterly taken away by storms, and vehemency of the winter. What doth God to replenish the earth again, and to restore the beauty thereof? He sendeth down his small and soft dew, the drops whereof, in their descending, are neither great nor visible; and yet, thereby are the pores and secret veins of the earth, which before by vehemence of frost and cold were shut up, opened again. And so doth the earth produce again the like herbs, flowers, and fruits. Shall ye then think, that the dew of God's heavenly grace shall not be as effectual in you, to whom he hath made his promise, as that it is, in the herbs and fruits that from year to year bud forth and decay? If ye do so, the prophet would say, your incredulity is inexcusable, because ye do neither rightly weigh the power, nor the promise of your God.

The like similitude useth the apostle Paul, against such as called the resurrection in doubt, because, that by natural judgment they could not apprehend, that flesh once putrified, and resolved, as it were, into another substance, should rise again, and return again to the same substance and nature. "O fool," saith he, "that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare corn, as it falleth, of wheat, or some other; but God giveth it a body as it pleaseth him, even to every seed his own body." (1 Corin., xv.) In which words and sentence, the apostle sharply rebuketh the gross ignorance of the Corinthians, who began to call in doubt the chief article of our faith, the resurrection of the flesh, after that it was once resolved, because that natural judgment (as said is) reclaimed thereto. He reproveth, I say, their gross ignorance, because that they might have seen and considered some proof and document thereof, in the very order of nature. For albeit the wheat, or other corn cast in the earth, appeareth to die, to putrify, and so to be lost, yet we see, that it is not perished, but that it fructifieth, according to God's will and ordinance. Now, if the power of God be so manifest in raising up of the fruits of the earth, unto the which no particular promise is made by God, what shall be his power and virtue in raising up of our bodies, seeing that thereto he is bound, by the solemn promise of Jesus Christ, his eternal Wisdom, and the Verity itself that cannot lie? Yea, seeing that the members must once communicate with the glory of the Head, how shall our bodies, which are flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bones, lie still for ever in corruption, seeing that our head, Jesus

Christ, is now exalted in his glory? (Eph., iv.) Neither yet is this power and good will of God to be restrained to the last and general resurrection only; but we ought to consider it in the marvellous preservation of his church, and in the raising up of the same from the very bottom of death, when by tyrants it hath been oppressed from age to age.

Now, of the former words of the prophet we have to gather this comfort, that if at any time we shall see the face of the church within this realm so defaced—as I think it shall be sooner than we look for—when we shall see, I say, virtue to be despised, vice to be maintained, the verity of God to be impugned, lies and men's inventions holden in authority; and finally, when we shall see the true religion of our God, and zealous observers of the same, to be trodden under the feet of such as in their heart say, there is no God, (Psalm xiv;) let us then call to mind, what have been the wondrous works of our God from the beginning; that it is his proper office to bring forth light out of darkness, order out of confusion, life out of death; and finally, that it is he who calleth things that are not, even as if they were, as before we have heard. And if in the day of our temptation (which in my judgment approacheth fast,) we be thus armed, if our incredulity cannot utterly be removed, yet shall it so be corrected, that damnable desperation oppress us not.

But now, let us hear how the prophet proceedeth: "*Come (saith he) thou, my people, enter within thy chambers, shut thy door after; hide thyself a very little while, until the indignation pass over.*"

Here, the prophet bringeth in God amiably calling upon his people, to come to himself, and to rest with him, unto such time as the fury and sharp plagues

should be executed upon the wicked and inobedient. It may appear at the first sight, that all these words of the prophet, in the person of God calling the people unto rest, are spoken in vain; for we neither find chambers nor rest more prepared for the dearest children of God, (so far as man's judgment can discern,) than there were for the rebellious and inobedient. For such as fell not in the edge of the sword, or died not of pestilence, or by hunger, were either carried captives into Babylon, or else, they departed after into Egypt, so that none of Abraham's seed had either chamber or quiet place, to remain within the land of Canaan. For the solution hereof, we must understand, that albeit the chambers whereunto God called his chosen, be not visible, yet notwithstanding, they are certain, and offer unto God's children quiet habitation in spirit, howsoever the flesh be travailed and tormented. The chambers are then God's sure promises, unto the which, God's people are commanded to resort, yea, within the which they are commanded to close themselves, in the time of greatest adversity. The manner of speaking is borrowed from that judgment and foresight which God hath printed in this our nature. For when that men espy great tempests appearing to come, willingly they will not remain uncovered upon the fields; but straightway they will draw themselves to their houses or holds, that they may escape the vehemency of the same. And if they fear any enemy to pursue them, they will shut their doors, to the end, that suddenly the enemy shall not have entry. After this same manner God speaketh to his people; as he should say, The tempest that shall come upon this whole nation, shall be so terrible, that nothing shall

appear but extermination to come upon the whole body. But thou, my people, thou, I say, that hearest my word, believest the same, and tremblest at the threatenings of my prophets, now when the world doth insolently resist, let such, I say, enter within the secret chamber of my promises; let them contain themselves quietly there, yea, let them shut the door upon them, and suffer not infidelity, the mortal enemy of my truth, and of my people that depend thereupon, to have free entry, to trouble, yea, rather, to murder my promise. And so shall they perceive that my indignation shall pass, and that such as depend upon me shall be saved.

Thus we may perceive the meaning of the prophet. Whereof we have first to observe, that God acknowledgeth them for his people, that are in greatest affliction; yea, such as are reputed unworthy of men's presence, are yet admitted within the secret chamber of God. Let no man think, that flesh and blood can suddenly attain to that comfort: and therefore, most expedient it is, that we be frequently exercised in meditation of the same. Easy it is, I grant, in time of prosperity, to say and to think, that God is our God, and that we are his people. But when He hath given us over into the hands of our enemies, and turned, as it were, his back unto us, then, I say, still to reclaim him to be our God, and to have this assurance that we are his people, proceedeth wholly from the Holy Spirit of God, and is the greatest victory of faith, which overcometh the world; (1 John, v,) for increase whereof, we ought continually to pray.

This doctrine we shall not think strange, if we shall consider, how suddenly our spirits are carried away from our God, and from believing his promise.



As soon as any great temptation doth apprehend us, then begin we to doubt if ever we believed God's promises, if God will fulfil them to us, if we abide in his favour, if he regardeth and looketh upon the violence and injury that is done unto us; and a multitude of such cogitations, which before lurked quietly in our corrupted hearts, burst violently forth, when we are oppressed with any desperate calamity. Against the which, this is the remedy—once to apprehend, and still to retain God to be our God; and firmly to believe, that we are his people, whom he loveth, and will defend not only in affliction, but even in the midst of death itself.

Secondly, let us observe, that the judgments of our God never were, nor yet shall be so vehement upon the face of the earth, but that there hath been, and shall be, some secret habitation prepared in the sanctuary of God, for some of his chosen, where they shall be preserved, until the indignation pass by; and that God prepareth a time that they may glorify him again before the face of the world, that sometimes despised them. And this ought to be unto us no small comfort in these apparent dangers, to wit, that we be surely persuaded, that how vehement that ever the tempest shall be, that it yet shall pass over, and some of us shall be preserved to glorify the name of our God, as is aforesaid.

Two vices lurk in this our nature. The one is, that we cannot tremble at God's threatenings, before that the plagues apprehend us, albeit that we see cause most just, why that his fierce wrath should burn as a devouring fire. The other is, that when calamities before pronounced fall upon us, then begin we to sink down in desperation, so that we never look for

any comfortable end of the same. To correct this our mortal infirmity, in time of quietness we ought to consider, what is the justice of our God, and how odious sin is: and above all other, how odious idolatry is in His presence, who hath forbidden it, and who hath so severely punished it in all ages, from the beginning. And in the time of our affliction, we ought to consider, what have been the wondrous works of our God, in preservation of his church, when it hath been in utmost extremity. For never shall we find the church humbled under the hands of tyrants, and cruelly tormented by them, but therewith, we shall find God's just vengeance to fall upon the cruel persecutors, and his merciful deliverance to be showed to the afflicted. And in taking of this trial, we should not only call to mind the histories of ancient times, but also. we should diligently mark, what notable works God hath wrought even in this our age, as well upon the one, as upon the other. We ought not to think, that our God beareth less love to his church this day, than that he hath done from the beginning. For as our God, in his own nature is immutable, so remaineth his love towards his elect always unchangeable; for as in Christ Jesus he hath chosen his church before the beginning of all ages, so, by him, will he maintain and preserve the same unto the end. (Ephes., i.) Yea, he will quiet the storms, and cause the earth to open her mouth, and receive those raging floods of violent waters cast out by the Dragon, to drown and carry away the woman, which is the Spouse of Jesus Christ, unto whom God, for his own name's sake, will be the perpetual protector. (Rev. xii.)

This saw that notable servant of Jesus Christ, Athanasius, who being exiled from Alexandria, by

that blasphemous apostate, Julian, the Emperor, said unto his flock, who bitterly wept for his envious banishment, "Weep not, but be of good comfort; for this little cloud will suddenly vanish." A "little cloud" he calleth both the Emperor himself, and his cruel tyranny. And albeit that small appearance there was of any deliverance to the church of God, or yet, of any punishment to have apprehended the proud tyrants, when the man of God pronounced these words, yet shortly after, God did give witness, that those words did not proceed from flesh nor blood, but from God's very Spirit. For not long after, [Julian] being in warfare, received a deadly wound, whether by his own hand, or by one of his own soldiers, the writers clearly conclude not; but casting his own blood against heaven, he said, *Vicisti tandem Galilee!* that is, At last thou hast overcome, thou Galilean; so in despite he termed the Lord Jesus. And so perished that tyrant in his own iniquity, the storm ceased, and the church of God received new comfort. Such shall be the end of all cruel persecutors. Their reigns shall be short, their end miserable, and their name shall be left in execration to God's people; and yet shall the church of God remain to God's glory, after all storms.

But now, shortly, let us come to the last point: Ver. 22. "*For behold*" (saith the prophet) "*the Lord will come out of his place, to visit the iniquity of the inhabitants of the earth upon them. And the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more hide her slain.*"

Because that the final end of the troubles of God's chosen shall not be, before that the Lord Jesus shall return to restore all things to their full perfection,

the prophet bringeth forth the eternal God, as it were, from his own place and habitation, and therewith, sheweth the cause of his coming to be, that he may take account of all such as have wrought wickedly : for that he meaneth, where that he saith, "He will visit the iniquity of the inhabitants of the earth upon them. And lest that any should think that the wrong-doers are so many, that they cannot be called unto account, he giveth unto the earth, as it were, an office and charge, to bear witness against all those that have wrought wickedly, and chiefly against those that have shed innocent blood from the beginning; and saith that the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more hide her slain men. If the tyrants of the earth, and such as delight in shedding of blood, should be persuaded that this sentence is true, they should not so furiously come to their own destruction. For what man can be so enraged, that he would willingly do even before the eyes of God, that which might provoke his majesty to anger; yea, provoke him to become his enemy for ever, if that he understood, how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God? The cause then of this blind fury of the world, is the ignorance of God, and that men think that God is but an idol; and that there is no knowledge above, that beholdeth their tyranny, neither yet justice that will, nor power that may, repress their impiety. But yet the Spirit of Truth doth witness the contrary, affirming, that as the eyes of the Lord are upon the just, and as his ears are ready to receive their sobbing and prayers, so is his angry visage against such as work iniquity. He hateth, and holdeth in abomination, every deceitful and blood-thirsty man, whereof he hath given sufficient document from age to age, in

preserving the one, or at least, in revenging of their cause, and in punishing of the other.

Where it is said, that the Lord will come from his place, and that he will visit the iniquity of the inhabitants of the earth upon them, and that the earth shall disclose her blood, we have to consider, what most commonly hath been, and what shall be the condition of the church of God; to wit, that it is not only hated, mocked, and despised, but that it is exposed, as it were, for a prey, unto the fury of the wicked, so that the blood of the children of God is spilt like water upon the face of the earth. The understanding whereof, although it be unpleasant to the flesh, yet to us it is most profitable, lest that we, seeing the cruel entreatings of God's servants, begin to misknow the Spouse of Jesus Christ, because that she is not entreated in this unthankful world, as that the just and upright dealing of God's children doth deserve; but contrariwise, for mercy, they receive cruelty; for doing good to many, of all the reprobate they receive evil. And this is decreed in God's eternal counsel, that the members may follow the trace of the Head, to the end, that God in his just judgments should finally condemn the wicked. For how should He punish the inhabitants of the earth, if their iniquity deserved it not? How should the earth disclose our blood, if it should not be unjustly spilt? We must then commit ourselves into the hands of our God, and lay down our necks, yea, and patiently suffer our blood to be shed, that the righteous Judge may require account, as most assuredly he shall, of all the blood that hath been shed, from the blood of Abel the just, till the day that the earth shall disclose the same. I say, every one that sheddeth, or consenteth to shed the

blood of God's children, shall be guilty of the whole. So that all the blood of God's children shall cry for vengeance, not only in general, but also in particular, upon every one that hath shed the blood of any that unjustly suffered.

And if any think it strange, that such as live this day, can be guilty of the blood that was shed in the days of the Apostles, let them consider, that the Verity itself pronounced, that all the blood that was shed from the days of Abel, unto the days of Zachariah, should come upon that unthankful generation, that heard His doctrine, and refused it. The reason is evident: for as there are two heads and captains that rule upon the whole world, to wit, Jesus Christ, the prince of justice and peace, and Satan, called the prince of the world; so are there but two armies, that have continued battle from the beginning, and shall fight unto the end. The quarrel is one which the army of Jesus Christ sustains, which the reprobate do persecute; to wit, the eternal truth of the eternal God, and the image of Jesus Christ printed in his elect; so that whosoever in any age persecuteth any one member of Jesus Christ for his truth's sake, subscribeth, as it were, with his hand, the persecution of all that have passed before him. And this ought the tyrants of this age deeply to consider; for they shall be guilty not only of the blood shed by themselves, but of all (as said is) that hath been shed for the cause of Jesus Christ, from the beginning of the world.

Let the faithful not be discouraged, although they be appointed as sheep to the slaughter-house; for He for whose sake they suffer, shall not forget to revenge their cause. I am not ignorant, that flesh and blood

will think that kind of support too late; for we had rather be preserved still alive, than to have our blood to be revenged after our death. And, truly, if our felicity stood in this life, or if death temporal should bring unto us any damage, our desire in that behalf were not to be condemned. But seeing that death is common to all, and that this temporal life is nothing but misery, and that death doth fully join us with our God, and gives us the possession of our inheritance, why should we think it strange to leave this world, and go to our Head, and sovereign Captain, Jesus Christ?

Now, last, we have to observe this manner of speaking, where that the prophet saith, "The earth shall disclose her blood." In which words, the prophet would accuse the cruelty of those, that dare so unmercifully rive from the breasts of the Earth, the dearest children of God, and cruelly cut their throats in her bosom, who is by God appointed the common mother of mankind; so that she unwillingly is compelled to open her mouth, and receive their blood. If such tyranny was used against any natural woman, as violently to pull her infant from her breasts, cut the throat of it in her own bosom, and compel her to receive the blood of her dear child in her own mouth, all nations would hold the fact so abominable, that the like had never been done in the course of nature. And no less wickedness commit they, that shed the blood of God's children, upon the face, as I have said, of their common mother, the earth. But be of good courage, O little and despised flock of Christ Jesus, for He that seeth your grief, hath power to revenge it! He that will not suffer one tear of your's to fall, but that shall be kept and reserved in his bottle, till

the fulness thereof he poured down from heaven upon those that caused you to weep and mourn—this your merciful God, I say, will not suffer your blood for ever to be covered with the earth. Nay, the flaming fires that have licked up the blood of any of our brethren; the earth that hath been defiled with it, I say, with the blood of God's children—for otherwise, to shed the blood of the cruel blood-shedders, is to purge the land from blood, and as it were, to sanctify it—the earth, I say, shall purge herself of it, and show it before the face of God; yea, the beasts, fowls, and other creatures whatsoever, shall be compelled to render that which unjustly they have received, be it flesh, blood, or bones, that appertained to thy children, O Lord; which altogether thou shalt glorify, according to thy promise made to us in Jesus Christ, thy Son; to whom with thee, and the Holy Ghost, be honour, praise, and glory for ever and ever, Amen!

Let us now humble ourselves in the presence of our God; and from the bottom of our hearts let us desire him to assist us with the power of his Holy Spirit, that although for our former negligences God give us over into the hands of others, than such as rule in his fear, that yet he let us not forget his mercy, and that glorious name that hath been proclaimed amongst us: but that we may look throughout the dolorous storm of his present displeasure, and see, as well what punishment he hath appointed for the cruel tyrants, as what reward he hath laid in store for such as continue in his fear, to the end. That it would further please Him, to assist, that albeit we see his church so diminished, that it shall appear to be brought, as it were, to utter extermination, that yet we may be assured, that in our God there is power and will to



increase the number of his chosen, even till they be enlarged to the uttermost coasts of the earth.

Give us, O Lord, hearts to visit thee in time of our affliction; and that albeit we see none end of our dolours, that yet our faith and hope may conduct us to the assured hope of that joyful resurrection, in the which, we shall possess the fruit of that for the which now we travail! And in the mean season, grant unto us, O Lord, to repose ourselves in the sanctuary of thy promise, that in thee we may find comfort, till this thy great indignation begun amongst us, may pass over, and thou thyself appear, to the comfort of thy afflicted, and to the terror of thine enemies. Let us pray with heart and mouth:

Almighty God, and merciful Father, etc.

Lord, in thy hands I commend my spirit; for the terrible roaring of guns, and the noise of armour, do so pierce my heart, that my soul thirsteth to depart.

The last of August, 1565, at four in the afternoon; written indigestly, but yet truly, so far as memory would serve, of those things that in public preaching I spoke upon Sunday, the 19th of August, for the which I was discharged to preach.

Be merciful to thy flock, O Lord, and at thy good pleasure put end to my misery!

JOHN KNOX.

## LETTERS OF JOHN KNOX.

## L

## TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

He comes and shall not tarry, in whom is our comfort and final felicity.

**D**EARLY BELOVED SISTER in Jesus, our Sovereign. Rejoice now, and be glad from the heart, for that which long the prophets of God have cried, appeareth now shortly to come to pass—the elect of God to suffer, as they have done from the beginning. And why shall you rejoice therein? Because it is a sure seal and testimony of that word which we profess, to be the very true and infallible word of God, to the which, he who adheres, shall not be confounded—and also, because our glory cannot be perfect, till first we taste of that cup which, albeit it be displeasing to the flesh, yet is it most wholesome and profitable for us. The cause of these my words, is not sudden chance that newly is happened, but the perpetual and constant course of God's true Word, from the first declaration thereof to the world. O miserable, unthankful, and most mischievous world! what shall be thy condemnation, when He that has so often gently provoked thee to obey his truth, shall come in his glory, to punish thy contempt? Who shall hide thee from the presence of that lion whom thou didst persecute in every age? What shall excuse thee, that so tyrannously hast shed the blood of such as faithfully laboured to bring thee from blind ignorance and idolatry, when stubborn contemners shall cry, "Mountains, fall

on us, and hide us from the presence of the Lord!" Dear Sister, we shall be placed in most security with the Lamb, in whose blood we are purged.

My Lord of Westmoreland has written unto me this Wednesday, at six of the clock at night, immediately thereafter to repair unto him, as I will answer at my peril. I could not obtain licence to remain the time of the sermon, upon the morrow. Blessed be God, who does ratify and confirm the truth of His Word from time to time, as our weakness shall require. Your adversary, Sister, doth labour, that you should doubt whether this be the Word of God or not. If there had never been testimonial of the undoubted truth thereof before these our ages, may not such things as we see daily come to pass, prove the verity thereof? Doth it not affirm, that it shall be preached, and yet contemned, and lightly regarded by many? that the true professors thereof shall be hated by father, mother, and wife, of the contrary religion? that the most faithful shall cruelly be persecuted? And cometh not all these things to pass in ourselves? Rejoice, Sister, for the same Word that fore-speaketh trouble, doth certify us of the glory subsequent. As for myself, albeit the extremity should now apprehend me, it is not come unlooked for. But alas! I fear that yet I am not ripe, nor able to glorify Christ by my death. But what lacketh now, God shall perform in the own time.

Where God saith, "It repenteth me that I made Saul king," he means not, that Saul at any time was a member of Christ's body; but that he was a temporal officer, promoted of God, and yet most inobedient to his commandment; and therefore, that he would provide another to occupy his room: and that where

he says, "I repent," we must understand him to speak after the manner of men, attemperating himself to our understanding. For otherwise, God repenteth not; for before, his majesty knew the inobedience and rebellion of the wicked king. But, Sister, God the Father cannot repent, that he hath engrafted us members of Christ's body; for that were to repent the honour of His own Son, yea, and his own good work in us. Abide patiently, and give no place to the temptations of the adversary. Let him shoot his darts in his despite; but say you in your heart, The Lord is my defender, and therefore shall I not be confounded: dolour shall be but for a moment, but ever and ever shall we reign with Jesus our Lord; whose Holy Spirit be your comfort to the end. Be sure I will not forget you and your company, so long as mortal man may remember any earthly creature.

Your brother,

JOHN KNOX.

From Newcastle, 1553.

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## II.

### TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

DEARLY BELOVED SISTER,—After hearty commendation: As I can call to mind, there rests nothing in your writings whereunto I have not answered, except God's repentance that he made Saul king. For understanding whereof, you shall consider, that the Spirit of God must attemper and submit himself oft-times to our weakness, and speak unto us who, by corruption, are made ignorant and rude, so that we may understand what he worketh by his incomprehensible wisdom and inscrutable providence; while

that yet there is no such thing in our God, as the vocal words, and first sense appeareth unto us. As when David saith, Rebuke me not, O Lord, in thy hot displeasure—and in the book of Exodus, “The Lord was angry with Moses.” And sundry other places of Scripture do attribute unto God not only such members as be in man, but also, such affections and unstable passions, which nevertheless are not in God, who always in himself remains stable, constant, holy, and just. And of that sort is that manner of speech, “It repenteth me that I have made Saul king.” That is, My justice is compelled to eject and throw down the rebellious king from that estate and dignity in which I have placed him; and so, shall I appear to repent my former work. The Scripture attributes to God such conditions, qualities, and affections, as his majesty appeareth to show in his works upon his creatures. As when He plagues the world, then says the Scripture, “God did it in his anger.” When he delivers such as long have suffered trouble, then says the Scripture, “God stretched out his hand”—“God lifted up his eyes, his face, or countenance”—and yet no such thing can be in the Godhead. And therefore, Sister, think not that God is changeable, and doth repent, albeit such appear; for so speaks the Scripture to instruct our infirmity. For before He appointed Saul to be king, his majesty knew his inobedience, and how he was to be abjected;<sup>1</sup> neither did Saul please him in Jesus his Son, but always was reprobate, and never did embrace the promise of remission and reconciliation in the said promises, albeit the Lord did promote him to worldly dignity; which is no sure sign of God’s everlasting love and favour, seeing thereunto is placed as well the ungodly as godly.

<sup>1</sup> Cast away.

Then would you enquire, How shall we be assured of God's favour that changeth not? By his own word, which assures us, that such as knowing and lamenting their own corruption and great infirmities, and that embrace the satisfaction which is by the redemption in Christ's blood, are surely ingrafted in Christ's body, and therefore, shall never be separated nor rent from him: as witnesseth Himself, saying, "Forth of my hands can none reive."<sup>1</sup>

Look further of this matter, in the other letter written unto you, at such time as many thought I never should write after to man. Heinous were the delations laid against me, and many are the lies that are made to the council. But God one day shall destroy all lying tongues, and shall deliver his servant from calamity. I look but a day or other to fall into their hands, for more and more rageth the members of the devil against me. This assault of Satan has been to his confusion, and to the glory of God; and therefore, Sister, cease not to praise God, and to call for my comfort, for great is the multitude of enemies whom, every one, the Lord still conform.

I intend not to depart from Newcastle before Easter. My daily labours must now increase, and therefore, spare me so much as you can. My old malady troubles me sore, and nothing is more contrarious to my flesh than writing. Think not that I weary to visit you; but unless my pain shall cease, I will altogether become unprofitable. Work, O Lord, even as pleaseth thy infinite goodness; and relax the troubles at thy own pleasure, of such as seek thy glory to shine. And I bid you heartily farewell in Christ, our sovereign.—Your brother,

JOHN KNOX.

At Newcastle, the 23rd of March, 1553.

<sup>1</sup> Pluck, to take by force.

## III.

## TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

The Lord shall put an end to all troubles.

DEARLY BELOVED SISTER in our Saviour Jesus Christ,—The manifold and general assaults of the devil raging against you, and troubling your rest, while you thirst and most earnestly desire to remain in Christ, doth certify unto me your very election, which the devil envies in all the chosen of God. And albeit his arts be subtle, and tormenting painfully, yet thereof followeth great commodity—a hatred of yourself, who may not nor cannot resist as you would his temptations, and a continual desire of God's support; which two are most acceptable sacrifices in God's sight. Where the Adversary would persuade, that it maketh nothing what you think, because it shall not be imputed, there he is compelled to bear witness to the truth, but not of a true intent. Truly, neither thought nor deed shall be imputed unto you, for they are remitted in Christ's blood. But therefore do you not rejoice in thoughts and works repugning to God's express commandment; but do lament and mourn, that any such motion should remain in you; and desire to be made free from that corruption, by your champion, Christ. And so you shall be, as he has promised. Other things, as time will permit, I will most gladly fulfil. I laud and praise my God, asking from my heart, that such as have professed his Son Jesus, condemn not his admonitions to the end. Amen.—Your brother in Christ Jesus,

JOHN KNOX.

From Carlisle, this Friday Afternoon, 1553.

## IV.

## TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

There is no condemnation to such as be in Christ Jesus, to whom be all praise.

DEARLY BELOVED SISTER,—After most hearty commendation. In my conscience I judge, and by the Holy Spirit of my God am fully certified, that you are a member of Christ's body, sore troubled and vexed presently, that the lusts and vain pleasures of the flesh mortified, you may shortly rest, and rise hereafter in honour and glory, whereto yet never attained mortal creature, but first they confessed themselves almost burnt in hell. Wherefore persevere. Albeit the battle be strong, yet the glory of your deliverance may be ascribed, and wholly given to God alone. I think it best you remain till the morrow, and so shall we commune at large at afternoon. This day, you know, to be the day of my study, and prayer unto God. Yet if your trouble be intolerable, or if you think my presence may relieve your pain, do as the Spirit shall move you; for you know, that I will be offended with nothing that you do in God's name. And oh! how glad would I be to feed the hungry, and give medicine to the sick. Your messenger found me in bed, after a sore trouble, and most dolorous night; and so, dolour may complain to dolour, when we two meet. But the infinite goodness of God, who never despiseth the petitions of a sore troubled heart, shall at his good pleasure [remove these<sup>1</sup>] pains that we presently suffer, and in place thereof, shall crown us with glory and immortality for ever. But, dear

<sup>1</sup> Here we have ventured to supply, from conjecture, two or three words cut out of the manuscript.



Sister, I am even of mind with faithful Job, that most sore tormented, that my pain shall have no end in this life. The power of God may, against the purpose of my heart, alter such things as appear not to be altered, as he did unto Job; but dolour and pain, with sore anguish, cries the contrary. And this is more plain than ever I spake, to let you know, you have a fellow and companion in trouble. And thus, rest in Christ, for the head of the Serpent is already broken down, and he is stinging us upon the heel.

In great haste. Your brother,

JOHN KNOX.

From Newcastle, 1553.

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V.

TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

DEARLY BELOVED SISTER,—In our Saviour and only Mediator, Jesus, who is the first-begotten of the dead; the sole and sovereign prince, exalted above all powers and potentates whatsoever; that by him we may, now sore afflicted and punished in absence of our Bridegroom, receive immortality and glory, when he shall return to restore liberty to the sons of God; of which number are you and I, beloved Sister, whom the enemy doth trouble, not without permission of our heavenly Father, to further mortification of this wicked flesh. Be persuaded of the merciful presence of our Lord God and Father, for he doth not trouble you in sign of his wrath, absence, or not regarding of you. No, dear Sister, every son whom the Father loveth, he chasteneth. But not ever will He threaten; but from time to time he giveth, and shall give rest,

as our utility shall require. Which thing may be unto your heart (as it is unto mine,) most comfortable remembrance, till that you may espy the providence of our God to be such, as his own word does witness: that is, that sometimes he does turn away his face apparently even from his elect, and then are they in anguish and care; but mercifully returns he unto them, and gives gladness and consolation; which albeit it remain but the twinkling of an eye, yet is it the arles-penny<sup>1</sup> of his eternal presence. Resist, Sister, and continue.

My brother hath communicated his whole heart with me, and I perceive the mighty operation of God: and so, let us be established in His infinite goodness, and most sure promises; whose omnipotent Spirit be your comfort for ever.

Your brother in Jesus Christ,

JOHN KNOX.

From Newcastle, 1553.

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## VI.

### TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

RIGHT DEARLY BELOVED SISTER in our Sovereign, Jesus Christ,—Very dolour and anguish of heart will not suffer me at this instant to answer your letter: but to call for you I will not cease, and doubt not to o'tain of God's free mercy, your continuance in Christ. Faithful is He that has commanded us to pray one for another, promising that our petitions are

<sup>1</sup> Earnest-money; or small sum in hand with which a bargain is ratified.

acceptable, yea, and that we shall give life to such as sin not unto death. To sin to death is, to blaspheme the word of life, which once we have professed, and to fall back (not of fragility, but of hatred and contempt,) to such idolatry and abomination as the wicked maintain; whereof I am most surely persuaded in the Lord Jesus, that your heart shall never do. You are ingrafted in the body, and by Him you shall be defended, but not without dolour; for it behoves every member of his body, to suffer with the Head. That false and lying spirit does according to his wicked and deceivable craft, when he would cause you believe that I know your rejection. No, false devil! he lies: I am even equally certified of your election in Christ, as I am that I myself preacheth Christ to be the only Saviour, etc. I have more signs of your election than presently I can commit to writ

Your brother,

JOHN KNOX.

At Newcastle, in haste, 1553.

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## VII.

### TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

The Lord shall put end to all dolours at his good pleasure.

RIGHT DEAR BELOVED MOTHER: after most hearty commendation,—I have received your letter from your son, Mr. George, the piteous complaints whereof pierce and trouble my heart, having no comfort but that the truth of God assures me, that from the hands of Jesus Christ may none wave. For seeing that He is sent of God the Father, a triumphant

victor, to conquer the kingdom, it should redound to his dishonour, if any should take the spoil from him. You have committed yourself to his protection, and have forsaken all saviours but him alone. The knowledge of your sins does trouble and displease you? you know that his blood is a sufficient satisfaction for all believers therein. And albeit the Adversary would persuade you that you believe not, trust not his deceivable lies. You believe, and are also sorry, that more constantly you cannot believe, and therefore pray, "O Lord, increase my faith." Our faith is not worthy of and for itself of remission of sins, and of the life everlasting. But Jesus Christ is all-sufficiency to us, whose Justice and Holiness we embrace and receive by faith; which never can be perfect in us but that his mercy will accept it, how faint and feeble that ever it be, for his own infinite goodness and promise' sake.

And therefore, abide patiently the Lord's deliverance to the end, remembering that our Head is entered into his kingdom by troubles and dolours without number; yea, it may be said, that every hour was anguish and pain increasing in our Saviour Jesus, from the hour that his majesty received our mortal nature, until the rendering up the spirit in the hands of his Father, after that most lamentably he had complained in these words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" which words deeply considered by us, shall relieve a great part of our spiritual cross. For if so was the only Son entreated, and if it becomes the members to be like to the Head, why should we despair under such tribulations? He did not only suffer poverty, hunger, blasphemy, and death, but also he did taste the cup of God's wrath against

sin, not only to make full satisfaction for his chosen people, but also, that he might learn to be pitiful to such as are tempted. And therefore despair not, for your troubles be the infallible signs of your election in Christ's blood, being ingrafted in his body. As for the assaults of your enemy sometimes alluring you to idolatry, sometimes to other manifest iniquity, so that you obey him not, altogether there is no danger; but rather, the feeling of his continual assaults is the sign, that he hath not gotten victory over you, but that there is in you a spunk<sup>1</sup> of faith, which your heavenly Father shall never suffer to be quenched nor put out, but will keep and increase the same for his promise' sake.

Dear Mother,—so may and will I call you, not only for the tender affection I bear unto you in Christ, but also, for the motherly kindness you have shown unto me at all times since our first acquaintance—albeit such things as I have desired (if so had pleased God,) and you and others have long desired, are never like to come to pass, yet shall you be sure that my love and care toward you shall never abate, so long as I can care for any earthly creature. You shall understand, that this 6th of November, I spake with Sir Robert Bowes in the matter you know, according to your request; whose disdainful, yea, despiteful words, have so pierced my heart, that my life is bitter unto me. I bear a good countenance with a sore troubled heart, while that he that ought to consider matters with a deep judgment, is become not only a despiser, but also a taunter of God's messengers, (God be merciful unto him). Amongst others his most displeasing words, while that I was about to have

Spark.

declared my part in the whole matter, he said, "Away with your rhetorical reasons! for I will not be persuaded with them." God knows, I did use no rhetoric nor coloured speech; but would have spoken the truth, and that in most simple manner. I am not a good orator in my own cause; but what he would not be content to hear of me, God shall declare to him one day to his displeasure, unless he repent. It is supposed, that all the matter comes by you and me. I pray God that your conscience were quiet and at peace, and I regard not what country consume this my wicked carcase; and were it not that no man's unthankfulness shall move me (God supporting my infirmity) to cease to do profit unto Christ's congregation, the days should be few that England should give me bread. And I fear, that when all is done, I shall be driven to that end; for I cannot abide the disdainful hatred of those of whom not only I thought that I might have craved kindness, but also, to whom God hath been by me more liberal than they are thankful. But so must men declare themselves. Afflictions trouble me at this present; but yet I doubt not to overcome, by Him who will not leave comfortless his afflicted to the end; whose omnipotent Spirit rest with you. Amen.

By yours unfeigned in Christ, JOHN KNOX.

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## VIII.

### TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

DEARLY BELOVED SISTER in our Saviour,—After the sight of your letter received from your husband upon Saturday, the 19th of this instant December,

I partly was moved in my spirit, weighing with myself your continual trouble, which proceedeth from the infirmity and weakness of your soul, which ever thirsts for the presence of your Father's mercy, that no mortal man can have at all times. Yea, Sister, the most perfect is oftentimes left without all sense and feeling thereof; and that, partly, because sin must needs be mortified day by day (and no fire so tries the gold, as that kind of cross tries our faith,) till it burn and consume in us not only the vain glory of the world, but also, that blind love we bear to ourselves. So that, in very deed, we hate and abhor ourselves, because we find neither constancy nor perfection in this our corrupted nature; and therefore are we compelled to sob and groan for deliverance, by Him who hath promised, and shall not deceive.

This battle knoweth not the careless of the world, and therefore they live as brute beasts only, seeking such things as may please the flesh and appetites thereof, seldom beholding (alas, the more pity!) the end whereto man is created;—not so much here to live, as it were, for a moment, in that which flesh reckons to be pleasure, as for to inherit the kingdom prepared for such as unfeignedly thirsting their salvation to stand in Christ, by the redemption which is by his blood, do suffer with him; as it is appointed by the providence of our Father, that the members shall be correspondent and like to the Head, who in anguish of extreme dolour cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Oh, words most dolorous, and voice most lamentable, to be heard proceed from the mouth of the Son of God! Consider, dear Sister, he was no debtor to sin nor death; and yet, this did he suffer, not only to make satisfaction to the justice of

God, which we were never able to do; but also, to put us in comfort, that his suffering was not in vain, but even for our example, that in most extremity yet we shall look for deliverance, which we must needs receive, if we thirst for the same. Sister, albeit we hear not always God's word notably crying unto us, to put us in memory, that all that is in earth is transitory, yet have we the hand of our Father, that suffers us not to slumber and sleep in wantonness, vain-glory, and fleshly pleasure. I know well, that the purpose of Satan is to slay and to destroy: but his counsels shall be confounded, as they were, in purchasing leave to trouble just Job.

Upon Monday, I was with your daughter Bowes, who hath her heartily commended unto you, and unto our sister Marjory. She forgot none of your directions, but did declare unto me both your grief and her own, which I find both to proceed from one fountain. Praise be unto God, I left her in good comfort, referring thanks unto God for all his benefits. I was not, as yet I am, in good case to have travelled; for I had lain Thursday at night, and Friday all day, sore troubled in the gravel. I know the cause and original, but I cannot remedy; but He who willeth me to suffer, shall, at his pleasure. It will be after the twelfth day before I can be at Berwick, and almost I am determined not to come at all. You know the cause. God be more merciful unto them, than they are equitable to me in judgment. The testimony of my own conscience absolves me before His face, who looks not upon the person of man.

With troubled heart and weak body, at Newcastle, this Tuesday, 22nd of December, 1553.

Your brother,

JOHN KNOX.



I may not answer the places of Scripture, nor yet write the Exposition of the sixth Psalm, for every day of this week must I preach, if the wicked carcase will permit.

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## IX.

## TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

BELOVED SISTER,—After my hearty commendation. Touching the Angel of God sent to wrestle with Jacob, the matter shall be most easy to understand, if you shall mark, in what estate standeth Jacob departed from Laban. He was to enter into his native land, but not without great danger of his life, seeing before him was Esau, who before had conspired his death. And albeit Jacob had a promise of God to be kept, and also a commandment to enter into the land, and not to fear, yet when he comes to the very point where danger appeareth, was sore afraid, fearing the coming of his brother Esau; as by gifts and rewards, by direction of his messengers, by dividing of his companies to avoid the uttermost of his brother's hatred, evidently may be espied. This weakness and imbecility resting in all men (yet not imputed for sin in God's elect,) the merciful providence of our God supports, as that his wisdom thinketh and judgeth to be expedient. And albeit he useth not one medicine to every patient, yet to every one of his chosen people giveth he at one time or other some sure and undoubted significations, that he knoweth their infirmity, taketh care for the same, and that he will not suffer them to perish for ever, albeit the world and the devil rage most violently, to oppress and confound us that be most feeble and frail. And hereof have we an image most lively painted

forth, in the wrestling of Jacob with the Angel. Jacob feared, that his brother Esau should vanquish and overcome him: God would witness the contrary, by that he made him able to resist, and prevail during the whole night, against an angel, a spiritual creature, who alone, by God's power, is of greater puissance and might, than all earthly creatures.

And thus would God speak to the heart of Jacob: O Jacob, why fearest thou man, who is but flesh, bones, and blood, seeing I have made thee able to withstand a spiritual creature? This night that thou hast endured in wrestling, signifieth unto thee, and unto God's elect after thee, all time of transitory trouble, whereunto I have supported thee; not only to confirm thee in my promise, but also for comfort of such as shall hereafter suffer adversity, that my very Angel hath not prevailed against thee. And therefore will I now change thy name from Jacob, which signifieth a supplanter, deceiver, or one that is weak; which name was given to thee, in that thou in thy nativity apprehended the heel of thy brother, and did also, by counsel of thy mother, Rebecca, receive from thy father the benediction without his knowledge, which he provided for thy brother Esau. Which albeit it appeared to proceed from the counsel of the woman, meaning deceit, yet because I was author thereof, and moved her heart and mind thereto, now will I change that name, and thou shalt be called Israel, which signifies Strong by God. For by me you have ever been defended, and shall also be, to the end of this transitory battle; and so art thou victor not only of men, but also of gods, that is, of angels, spiritual creatures.

By this paraphrase upon the last part of the text, you may espy what is meant by the wrestling of Jacob

with the Angel all night, and what by the changing of Jacob's name. The Angel touched the main or principal sinew of Jacob's thigh, whereby he became crooked and did halt, to witness unto him, that it was not by his own power that so long he had resisted. The thigh, you know, is the principal part that sustains man to stand; and therefore, being maimed or crooked in that part, he is unable to wrestle. And yet (a matter greatly to be wondered,) Jacob would not suffer the Angel to depart, till he gave unto him the benediction, (a response before written;) and this was done at the spring of the morning. Hereby is signified, that our victory proceedeth not from our own strength, but from the goodness of Him who, by his Spirit, poureth into us understanding, will, sufficiency, and strength; for without him can we do nothing. And lest we should glory, as that some power resteth with us, (for ever would the flesh rest in itself,) it is necessary that our thighs be touched, and we made crooked, that is, that all hope and comfort of the flesh be taken from us, that we may learn to depend upon the promises of our most faithful God.

Let us not despair, albeit all the strength not only within us, but also appearing in others, vanish and forsake us. Remember, Sister, that God never brought any excellent work to pass, till first man's judgment was despaired thereof; and this his majesty doth, to notify his power to the sons of men. Abel cried not for vengeance upon Cain the murderer, till first his blood was cruelly shed; Joseph obtained not dominion and power, till first he suffered great trouble and imprisonment, and in the opinion of his father, was dead; Moses was not received in protection of Pharaoh's daughter, till first he was exposed to the

danger of the flood. And finally, Jesus Christ, our champion and head, did not obtain victory above all his enemies, so that after they might not trouble nor molest him any more, till first he suffered the vile death of the cross.

And so, Sister, albeit we be dejected even to the ground, yet with Jacob, let us hold fast the angel, that is, the promises of our God; and no doubt, benediction shall follow in the spring of the morning, that is, after the cloudy storms of these dolorous nights, wherein we fight not only against flesh and blood, (and yet, that were a battle too strong for our puissance,) but also against spiritual wickedness in heavenly things; that is, sometimes against despair, which would call all God's promises in doubt; and sometimes against confidence in one's self, wherewith almost every living man is infected, albeit, alas! every man doth not espy it. It is a sin dangerous and odious in God's sight; and happy are those that be entreated in the mercy of God, that they find no cause to rejoice in themselves! After long debate, Paul came to this knowledge, that when he found greatest weakness in himself, then did he glory, that the virtue and power of Jesus Christ might abide in him. Who earnestly can care for meat, yet feeleth not the pain of hunger? Who unfeignedly thirsts for drink, that sustains not the dolour of drought? And who with fervent heart can desire to be rid and delivered from the cares and dolours of this wicked flesh, yet tastes not the bitterness and anguishes thereof? And so, Sister, are troubles very profitable for God's chosen people, as well to humble the proudness born with us, as to engender in us a thirst and desire of the life everlasting.

Jacob thought he had seen God face to face, when he saw the Angel, and by him attained to so great knowledge; for he understood, by communing with him, what every point of his conflict meant, and wherefore he was made impotent of his thigh. And herein was not Jacob altogether deceived; for albeit he saw not the pure and very substance of God, as he is in his own essence, which, as God affirmeth to Moses, no man can see and live, that is, no living man (in his mortal life,) to see, perceive, and behold the naked substance of God, as his majesty is in his own beauty and glory, for that sight is reserved to the life everlasting, where and when we shall see as we are seen: and therein shall stand our great comfort and felicity: Albeit, I say, Jacob saw not God so, yet saw he the goodness of his God, the power of his God, and the merciful providence of his God, taking care for him, to deliver him from pursuit of his enemies whom so greatly he feared, and instructing him in such cases as appertained to his present comfort. And so, he saw God face to face; that is, he had a true and undoubted knowledge of God's will, and present favour towards him; for that is to see God, as Jesus Christ answereth unto Philip, desiring to see the Father, "He that seeth me," says Christ, "seeth the Father"—that is, he that understandeth the cause why I am come into the world, and so believes in me (which is to see me by faith,) the same man seeth the Father; that is, understands and knows, that God the Father beareth an unfeigned favour toward him. Christ here meaneth not of any corporal sight, but of the eyes and sight of faith, which pierceth through the clouds of darkness, that is, through the wrath of God which our sins do de-

serve, to the brightness of the glory of our Father's face, wherein we behold mercy and grace, in that he has given to us salvation and life in his only Son Jesus Christ. That our Saviour meant not here of any corporal sight it is plain; for Judas and many other reprobates saw the same face and visage of Jesus Christ, yea, also his works and wondrous signs, that either Peter, or any other of the apostles saw in the mortal flesh. And yet, no reprobate saw and considered God the Father, merciful to their offences in Jesus Christ. And so, the texts are not repugnant; for the text of Moses means, that no mortal creature in this life, for the dulness and infirmity of this corrupt nature, is able to behold the naked presence of God, as he is in his own substance and essence. And all other texts making mention that men have seen God, or spoken to God face to face, mean, that God reveals and notifies himself to such as he will, and in such form and similitude as his wisdom knows to be expedient for their infirmity. And thereby doth He instruct them of his counsel and godly will, as you may perceive, by his visions shown to Isaiah and Ezekiel, and other more prophets of God, whereof to write my other great labours permit not.

The contents of your other letter received long ago, I bear not now in mind: but I know your letter to be in custody, and so, at some convenient leisure, after advisement with your doubts, I will do diligence to resolve them; or if you shall write the same doubts again, if possible I will answer them, before I go. Be fervent in reading, fervent in prayer, and merciful to the poor according to your power, and God shall put end to all dolours, when least is thought to the judgment of man.—Your brother unfeigned, JOHN KNOX.

## X.

## TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

“ Rise, Lord, stretch out thy hand : forget not the sobs of the oppressed.”  
Psalm lxx.

RIGHT DEARLY BELOVED MOTHER in our Saviour, Jesus Christ,—Now is our dolour appointed by God, and forespoken by his prophets, come upon us, as the dolour of a woman in the birth of her first child; and so is it come, as with your ears, both openly and privately, oftentimes you have had declared.

When I remember your great infirmity, and the strong battle that externally you fight, and call to mind how small comfort you have on earth, I am compelled to sob and grieve to him that only may give strength, comfort, and consolation, without help of any creature, unto you in these most dolorous days. And good hope I have, that my petition shall not be repelled; but for Christ Jesus' sake accepted and granted: albeit not in such sort as you and I gladly would; yet, I doubt not, but in such sort we shall obtain it, as his glory, and our everlasting comfort and profit requireth.

It hath not been without the most special providence and favour of God, that these many days bypast, you have been grievously tempted, and sore assaulted, to revolt and turn back again to that abominable and blasphemous idolatry, which now, in God's anger, is erected, before the uttermost of his plagues be poured forth upon the stubborn and inobedient, who never would delight in the truth of his word; and therefore, of his just judgments most justly has he given them over, according to their heart's desire, to delight in

lies, to their eternal damnation. In the days, I say, beloved mother, that no appearance there was that ever such abomination should have taken place so suddenly within this realm of England, you were tempted and assaulted to turn back again to idolatry. Which tempting spirit, God, our heavenly Father, permitted to trouble you, partly, for that he would have you exercised in the battle, before the great danger approached, lest perchance you might have been overthrown, if unprovidedly, both occasion and temptation at once had assaulted you—and partly, that by continual repugnance, you might learn, how odious is all kind of idolatry in the sight of God. For Satan uses seldom to tempt, but in those things whereof he knows God most to be offended with; as pride, lust, covetousness, adultery, idolatry, and such like; the committers whereof, and continuers in the same, Paul pronounces to have no portion in the kingdom of God.

This is my hope, beloved mother, that in your continual battle so far you have profited, that in this case, almost you need no admonition of me. But because it is my bound duty, not only by a common Christian spirit and tender love according to godliness, that we have had since our first acquaintance, to do the uttermost of my power for your comfort by pen, therefore will I write, because the bodies are now put asunder, to meet again at God's pleasure, that which by mouth, and face to face you have heard. If man or angel shall labour to bring you back from the profession that once you have given, let them in that behalf be accursed. And in any part concerning your faith and religion obeyed of you, if any trouble you above measure, whether they be magistrates or carnal friends,



they shall bear their just condemnation, unless they speedily repent. But whosoever it be that shall solicit or provoke you to that abominable idol, resist you all such boldly unto the end, learning of the Holy Ghost, not to defile the temple of God with idols, neither yet to give your bodily presence unto them: but obeying God more than man, avoid all appearance of iniquity. The necessity that all men have so to do (that willingly will not deceive themselves,) I remit, partly, to that which oft you have heard, and partly, to a general letter<sup>1</sup> written by me in great anguish of heart to the congregations, of whom I hear say, a great part, under pretence that they may keep faith secret in the heart, and yet do as idolaters do, begin now to fall before that idol. But oh, alas! blind and deceived are they, as they shall know in the Lord's visitation, which so assuredly as our God liveth, shall shortly apprehend these backsliders, amongst the midst of idolaters. With very grief of heart I write, Better it had been unto them, never to have known the truth, than so suddenly, to God's great dishonour, to have returned to their vomit. God of his infinite mercy grant unto them speedy repentance; for if the sin sleep long, I fear it shall awake to their perpetual confusion.

But now, mother, comfort you my heart. God grant you may, in this my great affliction and dolorous pilgrimage. Continue stoutly to the end, and bow you never before that idol, and so will the rest of worldly troubles be unto me more tolerable. With my own heart I oft commune, yea, and as it were

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the Address to the Faithful, etc., in which he exposed the fallacy of the argument, that in times of persecution, external compliance with idolatry might be allowed, if the worshipper served God in his heart.

comforting myself, I appear to triumph, that God shall never suffer you to fall in that rebuke. Sure I am, that both you would fear, and be ashamed, to commit that abomination in my presence, who am but a wretched man, subject to sin and misery like to yourself. But, oh, Mother! though no earthly creature should be offended with you, yet fear you the presence and offence of Him who, present in all places, searcheth the very heart and reins; whose indignation once kindled against the inobedient, (and no sin more inflameth his wrath than idolatry doth,) no creature in heaven nor in earth, that only is creature, is able to appease the same. And therefore, dear Mother, avoid and flee from it, even as from the death everlasting. Very love and careful solicitude, which God knoweth my heart taketh for you, compels me to double<sup>1</sup> so oftentimes, and whereof a thing being uncertain, when God shall grant any opportunity to visit you again. But the Spirit of the Lord Jesus shall by his omnipotent and invincible power supply in you that which wanteth of worldly comfort, that the glory may be known to be our God's alone, who for a time useth to comfort, sustain, and feed a creature by another; but in the end, he draws us (his own image,) to himself, that by him alone, without the help of all, we may live, joise, reign, and triumph, as he has promised, by Jesus Christ his Son.

One thing will I not conceal from you, Mother, that neither are we free, nor yet in our hearts do we glorify God as our duty requireth, so long as that we have the carnal comfort and defence of creatures with us. The whole man in body and soul shall evidently prove this conclusion: for this body that liveth by meat, drink, clothing, and nourishment, we see it subject to

<sup>1</sup> Repeat.

infirmity, yea, to mutability and fine,<sup>1</sup> as the final death of all men declareth. And the soul even of the very elect, living by the lively word of our heavenly Father, having a teacher that carries flesh, is always flowing and troubled with some fear; as in Christ's apostles, and many others, most manifestly we are instructed. But when all earthly creature ceaseth, then shall the sufficiency of God's Spirit work his own work.

And therefore, beloved Mother, fear not the battle that you sustain, neither yet the infirmity that you find either in flesh or spirit. Only abstain from external iniquity, that you make not your members pertinents to sin, and your imperfections shall have no power to damn you; for Christ's perfection is imputed to be yours, by faith which you have in his blood. Be assured, Mother, willingly I will not deceive you: if any such infirmity were damnable, long ago I would have showed you the truth. But no more nor God is displeased, albeit that sometimes the body be sick, and subject to diseases, and so, unable to do the calling; no more is he offended, albeit the soul in that case be diseased and sick. And as the natural father will not slay the body of his child, albeit through sickness it faint, and abhor comfortable meats, no more (and much less) will our heavenly Father slay our souls, albeit through spiritual infirmity, and weakness of our faith, sometimes we refuse the lively food of his comfortable promises. Where the contempt of God is by his grace removed, and a love of justice and of the life to come engrafted in the heart, there is the infallible seal and testimony of the Holy Ghost, who shall perform his own work

<sup>1</sup> End, dissolution.

in due season; for the power of God is known in our infirmity. And thus, commit I you to the protection of Him, who by grace has called you from darkness to light, by faith has purged your conscience and heart, and of his free mercy shall glorify you, according to his promise made unto them that obediently receive the message of life, in Christ Jesus our Lord; whose omnipotent Spirit rest with you for ever.

At Dieppe, the 20th of July, 1554, after I had visited Geneva and other parts, and returned to Dieppe, to learn the estate of England and Scotland. My own estate I cannot well declare; but God shall guide the footsteps of him that is wilsome,<sup>1</sup> and will feed him in trouble, that never was greatly solicitous for the world. If any collection might be made among the faithful, it were no shame for me to receive that, which Paul refused not in the time of his trouble. But all I remit to His providence that ever careth for his own. Rest in Christ.

Your Son with troubled heart,

JOHN KNOX.

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## XI.

### FROM SCOTLAND TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

The ways of man are not in his own power.

Albeit my journey toward Scotland, beloved Mother, was most contrarious to my own judgment, before I did enterprise the same, yet this day I praise God for them who were the cause external of my resort to these quarters; that is, I praise God in you, and for you, whom he made the instrument to draw me from the den of my own ease. You alone did draw me from the rest of quiet study, to contemplate

<sup>1</sup> Of willing mind.

and behold the fervent thirst of our brethren night and day sobbing and groaning for the bread of life. If I had not seen it with my eyes in my own country, I could not have believed it. I praised God when I was with you, perceiving that in midst of Sodom, God had more Lots than one, and more faithful daughters than two. But the fervency here doth far exceed all others that I have seen. And therefore you shall patiently bear, although I spend here yet some days; for depart I cannot, unto such time, as God quench their thirst a little. Yea, Mother, their fervency doth so ravish me, that I cannot but accuse and condemn my slothful coldness. God grant them their heart's desire. And I pray you advertise of your estate, and of things that have occurred since your last writing. Comfort yourself in God's promises, and be assured, that God stirs up more friends than we be ware of. My commendations to all in your company. I commit you to the protection of the Omnipotent. In great haste, the 4th of November, 1555. Your Son, JOHN KNOX.

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XII.

## FROM SCOTLAND TO HIS MOTHER-IN-LAW.

BELoved MOTHER,—With my most hearty commendation in the Lord Jesus. Albeit I was fully purposed to have visited you before this time, yet hath God laid impediments which I could not avoid. They are such, as I doubt not are to his glory, and to the comfort of many here. The trumpet blew the old sound three days together, till private houses of indifferent burgesses could not contain the voice of it.

God for Christ his Son's sake grant me to be mindful that the sobs of my heart have not been in vain, nor neglected in the presence of his majesty. Oh! sweet were the death that should follow such forty days in Edinburgh, as here I have had three! Rejoice, Mother, the time of our deliverance approacheth; for as Satan rageth, so does the grace of the Holy Spirit abound, and daily giveth new testimonies of the everlasting love of our merciful Father. I can write no more to you at this present. The grace of the Lord Jesus rest with you. In haste, this Monday.

Your Son,

JOHN KNOX.

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### XIII.

#### TO HIS SISTER IN EDINBURGH.

**The mighty comfort of the Holy Spirit for salutation.**

The unfeigned desire which you seemed to have, beloved Sister, to proceed in godliness, moveth me at this time, to put you in mind of that solemn profession which once you have made in my presence. The which were your chief principals: First, that salvation or life is none to be found without the body of our Lord Jesus; which once offered, and suffering the death, we, and all God's elect children, do confess the only sacrifice acceptable in the sight of God the Father, for the offences of all believers. By which sacrifice, are all the elect of God not only once redeemed, but also sanctified by the same, for ever. All sacrifices for sin, other than the death of the immaculate lamb, Jesus, we did openly protest ourselves to abhor and detest. And last, all religion not

grounded upon the word of God, we feared not to proclaim, abominable and wicked.

Against this assertion, I know, that not only the devil in his own face, working within the sons of unbelief, shall strive and contend, as against that which is the subversion of his whole kingdom; but also, shall he clothe himself in an angel of light, and come to you under the colour of friendship (as in another letter I have touched;) and shall allure and solicit you by persuasions of the natural man, that you need not be so strait and so severe, for God is merciful; and therefore, that you may bear with the time, for avoiding danger and displeasure both to yourself and to others. Yea, perchance he shall be so bold, that he shall object, that you tempt God, except that you do as others do, to keep yourself in safety. But to all these objections, beloved Sister, I can answer no otherwise, than our Master gave counsel and commandment to his disciples, in these words, "Be ye simple as doves, and prudent as serpents." Before, he had spoken much of their trouble; and he was not ignorant, that by diverse ways they should be tempted. Sometimes, they should be provoked to defend themselves by the arm of man; and in that case, he commends unto them the simplicity of the dove, which can defend herself by no other means, from the assaults of ravenous fowls, but only by the swiftness of her wings. Sometimes, they should be tempted to obey wicked magistrates in things unlawful; and in that case he willed them to follow the prudence of the serpent, who doth stop her ears, when she beginneth to hear an instrument play, or any man sing, lest by the sweetness of the same, she should be brought asleep, and so, taken or slain. So

willed Christ his disciples to shut up the ears of their mind, when that ever the world, by pleasing allurements, would persuade us to decline from God, by obedience given to iniquity.

Be you assured, dear Sister, that all these persuasions are nothing else but sweet songs of the devil, to bring your soul asleep, to that intent that he may destroy it. True it is, that God is merciful; but ought we therefore to continue in sin, without repentance? If it be strait severity to flee and avoid idolatry, then is it foolishness to abstain from adultery, for they are both alike odious before God; yea, the one, in so far as it doth violate the first Table, is more abominable before him than the other. Danger is to be feared, I confess: but I wonder, that men, for fear of an uncertain danger, will jeopard to run into the inevitable and perpetual condemnation. The word of the living God, which was, is, and shall be sure and stable for ever, promises damnation to idolaters, and unto such as for fear of temporal punishment, dare not abstain from idolatry. But the word of vain man doth threaten temporal death to such, as will not obey their wicked and detestable precepts. Now, let your wisdom judge which danger is greatest, most sure, and most to be feared. The word of God which pronounceth death perpetual to idolaters is irrevocable, and cannot be false; the word and wrath of man is vain and uncertain, like himself. He can perform nothing of his own cogitations: he has not, by himself, breath nor life to live the moment of an hour. How then shall he have power to hurt and molest the sons and daughters of the most high God, without his own permission and tolerance?

No, Sister, there is no such thing to be feared;



neither can abstaining from idolatry be called a tempting of God, but a humble obedience given to his commandment, which his majesty shall acknowledge, allow, and justify, when fearful shrinkers shall tremble and shake, before the Judge most incorrupt. And therefore, dear Sister, study you to please your heavenly Father, and he shall take care over you. He that hath preserved you in your mother's womb, that hath sent you the light of his blessed Evangel, and hath covered the multitude of your sins with the mantle of his mercy, will not leave you comfortless, in your battle which you shall sustain for his truth's sake. The God of comfort and consolation, who hath called from death Jesus our Lord, who by the blood of the eternal testament is the great Pastor of our souls, make you perfect in all good works, and establish you in the known verity of Jesus our Lord: whose omnipotent Spirit comfort and assist you, now and ever.—Yours known, JOHN K. SINCLAIR.<sup>1</sup>

At Dieppe, the 8th of August, 1556.

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#### XIV.

##### TO HIS SISTER IN EDINBURGH.

Grace, mercy, and peace, from God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the perpetual increase of the Holy Spirit for salutation.

The chosen vessel of Christ Jesus, St. Paul, appointed to his ministry and preaching not by man,

<sup>1</sup> This name, we are informed in the manuscript volume, was that of Knox's mother, which "he wrote when he was in trouble." At the present period, when the clergy of Scotland had condemned him as a heretic, and burnt him in effigy, his usual signature might have compromised the safety of his correspondents.

but by the imperial voice of the Son of God speaking unto him from heaven, ashamed not to confess, dearly beloved, that albeit he had an earnest zeal and desire to have visited the congregation of Thessalonica in their greatest necessity, that yet he was impeded by Satan of his journey and purpose.

It may appear marvellous strange at the first sight, that Satan should have such power to impede such a good and godly work, which the people desired so earnestly. No congregation was more dear to him than that was, for that he had begotten them to Christ: after that he was afflicted, mocked, and rejected in many other places, that they notwithstanding received the word with such joy and gladness of the Holy Spirit, that they were an ensample to all the faithful in Macedonia and Achaia, for their faith, obedience, and constancy, was bruited and praised in far countries. This their promptness and ready obedience to receive Christ's evangel, which then in many places was condemned as a pernicious and wicked doctrine, moved the apostle unfeignedly to love them. And moreover, shortly after his departure from them, Satan did raise up great trouble and sharp persecution against the faithful in that city, even by their own companions, friends, and countrymen, so that love called upon the one part for his presence, and their affliction on the other side required his assistance in that their sudden battle. And yet doth he confess, that Satan did impede him, after that he had attempted over again to have visited them.

This, I say, may appear very strange at the first sight: but if we shall mark and consider, dear Sister, that God sometimes does humble his most faithful servants, disappointing them of their own enterprises,

which they nevertheless have purposed for promoting of his glory, we shall cease to wonder; and begin to magnify the providence of our mighty God, who only disposeth the times, and alone knoweth the causes why he not in all times satisfies the desires in this mortal life, of his dearest children. Assuredly, Paul earnestly thirsted to have been with them in the time of their battle, to have confirmed them in the doctrine which before he had taught; and their estate, (as said is,) required his comfort, yea, in their hearts they did sore lament and bewail his absence. But the desires of neither party were granted when they most required: but the journey of the apostle was stopped by Satan, not in his own person, but by his supports, instruments of iniquity, who continually did labour to stop the course of the Evangel, and therefore, did oft lie in wait for the apostle, seeking his destruction, as the diligent reader of the Acts of the Apostles may easily understand. This impediment made unto him by such as did trouble him, did he call the work of Satan, saying, "I have purposed once and again to have visited you, but Satan has impeded me." Not that Satan by himself, or the working in his obstinate soldiers, hath, or can have any power to impede the course of Christ's evangel, or yet to withhold spiritual comfort from the afflicted, but in so far, as it is permitted to them and him by the permission of God, to trouble the elect for a time.

Foolishness, presumption, and arrogance it were to me, to compare myself with that most excellent instrument of the Lord Jesus, in zeal towards the promoting of Christ's glory, or yet, love towards the salvation and comfort of my brethren. No, alas! as my heart is corrupt, and the hypocrisy thereof in

many thousand cases hid from myself, so is my zeal cold, and my love nothing, if it shall be tried by the right touch-stone. Only this dare I say, that sometimes (seldom, alas!) I feel a sob and groan, willing that Christ Jesus might openly be preached in my native country, with a certain desire that my ears might hear it, although it should be with the loss of this wretched life. And of very purpose to have visited you, did I leave this congregation here, and also, the family committed to my particular charge; but the cause of my stop do I not to this day clearly understand. I most suspect my own wickedness, who am not worthy of so great a joy and comfort, as to hear Christ Jesus truly preached, where my heart most thirsteth, by reason of my former unthankfulness, notwithstanding the former benefits which I cannot deny myself to have received from the hands of my God in greater abundance, than ever could have entered in my heart to have asked. But what hath been my inobedience to his Majesty, who yet hath promoted me, my own conscience is not ignorant. And therefore, I say, justly may my God not only deny unto me that which I most desire, but also, worthy am I to be deprived of all his gifts, unless his mercy shall shadow my offences. And so, to punish my former unthankfulness, it may be, that my God most justly hath permitted Satan to put in my mind such cogitations, as did impede my journey toward you at this present. And they were these: I heard such troubles as appeared in that realm; I began to dispute with myself as followeth: Shall Christ, the author of peace, concord, and quietness, be preached where war is proclaimed, sedition engendered, and tumults appear to rise? Shall not his Evangel be

accused, as the cause of all calamity which is like to follow? What comfort canst thou have, to see the one half of the people rise up against the other; yea, to jeopard the one, to murder and destroy the other? But above all, what joy shall it be to thy heart, to behold with thy eyes thy native country betrayed into the hands of strangers, which to no man's judgment can be avoided, because that they who ought to defend it, and the liberty thereof, are so blind, dull, and obstinate, that they will not see their own destruction? These and more deep cogitations so did, and yet do trouble and move my wicked heart, that as I was without comfort, so was I almost without counsel, not only in that matter, but also in matters of smaller importance.

I grant, that none of these dangers which are before expressed, are any sufficient cause or excuse, why that I should not hazard all for the manifestation of Christ's glory; for if the apostles had looked to any of these, they should never have preached Christ; for all such troubles, and more grievous also, did ensue the publication of his Gospel. And it is forespoken, that so it must be also to the end of the world; for always must the reprobate, the children of this world, have some pretext of excuse, why that they reject the light which is offered. But therefore must not the messengers of God desist from their office. And therefore, I say, I know that no cogitations can excuse me before God; for my conscience beareth record, that the salvation of my brethren ought to be so dear unto me, that it ought to be sought with the hazard of all that is on earth. But, alas! as the wounded man, be he never so expert in physic or surgery, cannot suddenly mitigate his own pain and dolour, no more

can I the fear and grief of my heart, although I am not altogether ignorant what is to be done.

It may also be, that the doubts and cold writing of some brethren, did augment my dolour, and somewhat discourage me, that before was more than feeble; for Satan is so subtle, that he can make the very elect of God labour and travail for a time to stop the preaching of the Evangel. Which thing, because they do neither of hatred against Christ Jesus, nor of malice against the glory of his name, but either unwittingly, or else of some carnal affection and inconsiderate zeal, is not damned, but obtaineth pardon, and so, is suddenly removed, or else gently rebuked to repentance; as the foolish zeal of Peter, labouring to impede Christ's death, in persuading him to be merciful to himself; and the request of the Virgin, his mother, calling him forth to speak with her, what time he was most diligent, instructing the people. I am certainly persuaded, that whatsoever my brethren did write, did proceed of love as well towards me, as towards the common action which before was intended: but yet, it may be, that Satan did either abuse (God so permitting, for causes known to his wisdom,) their simplicity and zeal, or else, my fear and weakness, so that for that time, my journey towards you was stayed.

But nothing do I so much accuse as myself, and former iniquity: Desiring you, therefore, dear Sister, with all those that thirst the glory of Christ Jesus to be proclaimed among you, unfeignedly to call to God for me, that it would please him of his great mercy, and for Christ Jesus his Son's sake, to bury the remembrance of my grievous sins, and so to rule my heart with his principal Spirit, that from henceforth I may so behave myself within his kirk, that

my life be no slander to that doctrine which I profess. And I will not cease to call for you, and for the faithful in these quarters, that day by day ye may increase and grow in faith, zeal, love, and patience, strengthened by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost with such virtue and force, that no assaults of Satan, nor terrors of death, nor flattering promises of transitory life, move you from the stability of that which once ye have professed: but that constantly ye may continue to the end, leaving unto your posterity such testimony of your perfect faith, that in you they may have occasion to glorify God, in that it has pleased his godly majesty, by your patience, to minister and offer unto them the light of salvation. And if these things ye shall earnestly ask of God, to be granted unto you for the glory of his own name, and for the merits of his only well-beloved Son Jesus, then whatsoever shall become of my wretched carcase, I am most certainly persuaded, that the invincible power of Him who has commanded his Evangel to be preached to all realms and nations, shall perform that good work which he has began amongst you, to the praise and glory of his great mercy, and to your eternal comfort, by the means of our Lord Jesus; whose omnipotent Spirit rest with you now and ever.

Salute heartily in my name, Mr. David Sinclair, with others of faithful acquaintance. Superfluous I thought it to write to every one particularly; for I suppose that ye will not spare to communicate whatsoever ye receive, with such as may have profit or comfort thereby. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.—From our town, the 16th of April, 1558.

Your brother,                      JOHN SINCLAIR.

## XV.

TO MRS. GUTHRIE, JANET HENDERSON.

It is the Lord that giveth spirit to the feeble.

Albeit I have no particular matter to write unto you, beloved Sister, other than I have expressed in my other writings, yet I could not refrain to write these few lines to you, in declaration of my remembrance of you. True it is, that I have many whom I bear in equal remembrance before God with you, to whom, at this present I write nothing; either for that I esteem them stronger than you be, and therefore they need the less my rude labours, or else, because they have not provoked me by their writing, to recompense their remembrance. My daily prayer shall be for you, that as God hath given his Spirit to assist you, and hath opened your eyes, so that you can discern betwixt the good and the evil, that so it will please his majesty to confirm in you the spirit of constancy to the end.

The more that you feel your own weakness, the more able and apt a vessel you are to receive the grace of God, so that you once determine with yourself to die with Christ Jesus, rather than to refuse his known verity. Which albeit it appear bitter at the first sight, yet, when the necessity and fruit of it shall be considered, it shall be found pleasing, yea, and delectable. For statuted it is to all men once to die; but to few it is granted in so just an action, and with such honour, as to be Christ's witness, yea, and to be made like unto himself. If we should earnestly consider the fruit that shall follow a transitory and a momentary pain, as St. Paul calleth the afflictions of this life, they should not so greatly affray us. The fruit



is called Life everlasting, the Sight of God, and the Fulness of all joy. All these are promised for the suffering of a moment, if it be compared with time without end; and they are promised by Him who cannot deceive us. Alas, then, why fear we so greatly, as that there were no truth in God, or yet recompence for the battle, or travail of the just?

If any object, that I follow not the counsel which I give to others, for my fleeing the country declareth my fear, I answer, I bind no man to my example, and that I trust to God, that I do not expressly against the word which God uttereth by me. If the love of this life, or the fear of corporal death, caused me to deny the known verity, or to do any thing in the eyes of men, which might seem for fear to favour idolatry, then woe unto me for ever, for I were nothing but a traitor to Christ and his religion! But if my fear be so measured, that it compels me not to commit open iniquity, then do I nothing against my counsel, which is not mine, but the express commandment of Christ Jesus, commanding us to forsake ourselves, and to follow him.

If we knew, I say, what comfort lyeth hid under the fearful cross of Christ, we would not be so slack to take up the same. If we knew that life is buried with Christ in his grave, we would not fear to go and seek him in the same. We praise and extol the martyrs and saints who by afflictions have overcome this world; and yet we having the same occasion offered, do fly from the battle, yea, and alas! do agree with our enemies, before the battle approach. Call earnestly and incessantly for the assistance of God's Spirit, dear Sister, and determine with yourself to suffer with Christ Jesus, and then, shall you feel a comfort, according to

the promise of Christ Jesus. My own motion and daily prayer is, not only that I may visit you, but also, that with joy I may end my battle amongst you. And assure yourself of that, that whenever a greater number among you shall call upon me, than now hath bound me to serve them, that by His grace, it shall not be the fear of corporal punishment, neither yet of the death temporal, that shall impede my coming unto you.

I have written a large letter to the gentleman of my last acquaintance within that country, which partly came by your acquaintance and occasion ; and I have joined it with these your letters, that by you it may come more surely to his hands. I pray you take pains in that behalf. The matter is such, that I would all should understand of it ; therefore, do as you think expedient. Salute heartily my familiars. My mother and wife salute you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ rest with you.—From our town,<sup>1</sup> the 10th of March, 1557      Your brother,      JOHN SINCLAIR.

Geneva, where he was at present a minister, but waiting anxiously for a summons to Scotland.









DATE DUE

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